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THE
HISTORY
OF
Lady LOUISA STROUD,
AND THE HONOURABLE
Miss CAROLINE STRETTON.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

THE
HISTORY



Lady J. Stanhope

Mrs. Caroline Stanhope

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

THE
HISTORY
OF

Lady LOUISA STROUD,

AND THE HONOURABLE

Miss CAROLINE STRETTON.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON,

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OF

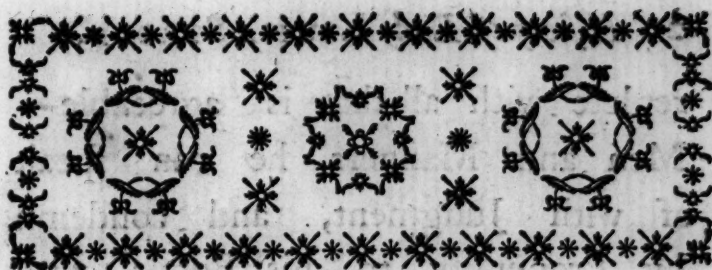
MISS CAROLINE STRETTON
AND THE HONOURABLE
LORD LOUISA STRETTON

TWO VOLUMES.



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THE
HISTORY
OF
Lady LOUISA STROUD,
AND THE HONOURABLE
Miss STRETTON.



*Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.
Miss STRETTON.*

Y Brother, my Dear, is
an unaccountable Compositi-
on—— When Lord Rox-
burgh is present, his Conversation is
Vol. II. B replet

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replete with all that is agreeable—
Men and Manners he can speak
of with Judgment, and condemn
his Propensity to his Bottle, with
an agreeable Severity. He will la-
ment, that Vice is too strong for him,
and insinuate, that good Company, and
the Benefits of a good Example, must
infallibly work an intire Reformation
in him; that, perhaps, his Advances
towards Discretion and Temperance
may be slow, but Patience is the Cha-
racteristic of true Friendship, as well as
Religion; nor would a well-disposed
Heart hesitate to attempt the Preserva-
tion of an immortal Soul, if there was
even the most distant Prospect of suc-
ceeding, merely because some Diffi-
culty would accrue in accomplishing it.
He is only profane, when his Reason
is

is intoxicated ; and so far does he value his Connexion with my Admirer, as to keep a Guard over himself, except when he knows he has an Opportunity of repairing his shattered Brain with Sleep, before his Arrival, or sets in after he has retired.

He has behaved exceedingly well, ever since *Letitia* has been confined to her Apartment. The Solitude he expresses for her Recovery, has a Humanity in it that amazes me. If he should form honourable Designs, as he conceives her to be at Liberty to receive his Addresses, I should be much perplexed. But I think I may confidently depend upon her refusing him—should she be otherwise inclined, she would forfeit, in that Instant, all the Ground she has gained in my Esteem;

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and though I think her intitled to every humane and tender Consideration, so long as she retains a due Sense of her Condition, yet I could by no Means strain it farther. Was she to become indelicate, or insincere, I am justified in withdrawing every favourable Sentiment of her. Her early Time of Life, her Inexperience, in Conjunction with the brutal Measures her Betrayer pursued, soften her Guilt—but, after having been a Partaker with the Adulterer, if she could consent to unite my Brother to Pollution, I should immediately convince her, that Principle, not Caprice, or her Merits, had induced me to countenance and protect her.

These Apprehensions cannot be injurious to her, as they will never transpire

spire from the Bosom of Friendship, in which I repose them.

The Men, my Dear, by that unworthy Notion, that a Woman, once seduced, is for ever after accessible, give Rise to our Severity, and hasty Suspicions.

I do, indeed, believe, that she who could capitulate with one Villain, would surrender to another ; but some unhappy Instances, similar to that of *Letitia's*, are Exceptions to the too general Rule. She, my *Caroline*, was not *seduced*, but *destroyed*.

Who would have expected that you would have turned Match-maker ? What ! Precipitate your Friend into a State that, by being permanent, ought to be entered into upon the most mature Deliberation ?—I am
B 3 astonished!

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astonished! To be sure, Appearances are very flattering, but may they not be deceitful? My Lord has a fine Understanding, a seemingly open and ingenuous Nature, but may he not be practicing nice Artifices to draw me in? The Web, I confess, is dexterously woven, but I am not a Jot the more secure from Entanglement.

I insist upon a Twelve-month's Probation—nothing shall shake my great Resolves—therefore, do not compel me to commit so great a Violence to my Inclination, as to decline complying with one kind Request of my *Caroline.*

Lady

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 7

*Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.
Miss STRETTON.*

LETITIA has at last emerged from her Appartment, and received the Compliments and Congratulations of Lord *Roxburgh* and my Brother, on her Recovery.

She is very weak, both in Constitution and Spirits. Her Doctor intimated to me, some Apprehensions he was under, of her going into a Decline. I hope they are without Foundation.

She is very earnest in her Desire to re-visit *Warwickshire*. Alas! Madam, said she, I have no longer Business in this Town—permit me to return to happier Scenes—not even

B 4

your

8 *History of Lady* LOUISA STROUD,

your Favour and Kindness can compensate the infinite Mortifications this Place of my just Punishment occasions me. They will retard the Re-establishment of my Health, and deprive me of the Power of convincing you, that the grateful Characters that are engraved upon my Heart, are indelible. — I will not detain her an Hour longer than is judged necessary.

Lord *Roxburgh* proposes visiting his Estate in *Gloucestershire*—he will call at the *Abbey* to do my Baise-mains. He has formed great Expectations of Happiness in your Conversation, nor will he be disappointed.

I flatter myself I shall prevail upon my Brother to accompany him—I want your Judgment of him—

I con-

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 9

I confess I am much more inclined to Despair, than Hope.

Poor *Letitia*! A fainting Fit! Ah! I now begin to fear for her. Remorse preys upon her gentle Nature—she has been restored but for a short Period. The Composure she imposes upon her outward Appearance, will be her Bane; the shallowest Streams are the most noisy.

Marry my Brother? Alas! it is the Grave alone will be her Bridegroom. But do not let me affect you—why is the inevitable Termination of Mortality so horrible, that we cannot indulge the Reflection without a total Depression of Mind? Surely, we act very impolitically; it would be wiser to familiarise it, to

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soften its Terror—It is the Passage to
Eternity.—The Triumph of the Worm
will be short-lived ; for, as an eminent
Poet says,

*An Angel's Arm can't snatch me from the
Grave;*

Myriads of Angels cannot keep me there !

Yes, my Caroline, notwithstanding you
and I must part, we shall be re-
united.



The

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 11

The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

O H, my dear *Louisa*, I am revived! I taste again the Cup of Joy! *Horatio*, that *Horatio* who first inspired my Heart with grave Reflections—who, since, has been the Cause of all my Sorrows—has now imparted a Satisfaction I otherwise could never have known.

He is well—has touched at *St. Helena*—has met with some unexpected good News of the scattered Fleet—is in high Spirits—looks forward to an happy Day—In short, read, read. The Eloquence of *Cicero* and *Demosthenes* is nothing, in

Vol. II.

B 6.

Com.

12 *History of Lady Louisa STROUD;*
Comparison of these few emphatic
Lines.

Mr. HORATIO FOSTER, to the
Hon. Miss STRETTON.

My dearest *Caroline,*

WE have made the Island of
St. Helena with uninterrupted
Success—prosperous Gales alone have
hitherto visited us. How long these
Smiles may continue, the God of
Nature only knows. The Elements
bear a most exact Resemblance
with the Chain of human Events.
Deluded by smooth Prosperity, we
are unapprehensive of what Revolution
the next Moment may produce.
Like the unthinking Sailors, we
revel the short Period of Tranquillity,
~~until~~ surprised, astonished, and over-
whelmed

whelmed with Horror, we exert our utmost Skill and Strength to save our shattered Bark; see our Friends on all Sides swallowed up in the deep Abyss of Calamity and Misfortune; yet if we can but weather it out, we instantly return to the same Dream from which we had been before roused.

This is a dull Strain—This a Love Epistle? Impossible!—and yet it is dictated by a Heart, glowing with the most tender Sensibility. But Oh, my *Caroline*, how unworthy should I be of your Approbation, if I confined my Admiration of you to your *Person* alone? Was I to tell you, that I was incapable of beholding the Face of the Sun, without murmuring, or of the Moon without re-pining;

pinning; that I had lost my Relish for every Amusement; that the Company of my Fellow-voyagers was distasteful to me; I know you would despise the unnatural Adulation. No, my *Caroline*, the Rising Sun inspires me with the Hope, that you enjoy its benign Influence; that it induces you to engage in some agreeable Party, to divert your tender Apprehensions for my Safety; that the enlightening Moon sees you return unfatigued, from spending a cheerful Day, in the Conversation of your Friends.

A Declaration, such as is the former, would have displeased my *Caroline*—such an Opinion she would have condemned: But, permit me to add this Truth, that, notwithstanding I
can

can behold other Objects than Miss *Stretton*, and attend to Chat in which she has no Share, her Idea is inseparable from every Incident that occurs, or Prospect that presents itself.

I have been most agreeably surpris'd with happy Accounts of two of the Ships in which my Father is deeply concerned. I own it encourages me to flatter myself my Voyage will answer my best Wishes, alleviating his Misfortunes, and approving myself worthy Miss *Stretton's* Hand.

I write this Letter under very singular Circumstances—Our Ship rocks to such a Degree, as to require my Stand-dish to be lashed—the Motion has greatly increased since I began

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began—it is not absolutely a Storm, but prodigiously like one—I will not conclude my Letter until I know the Event. Oh, *Caroline*, if we should never meet again!

* * * * *

After five Hours Uncertainty, great Fatigue, and infinite Confusion, I have the Pleasure, my *Caroline*, of resuming my Pen, to inform you, that I am spared from our late threatening Destruction. We have lost some of our Sailors; but, upon the whole, our Deliverance was amazing.

I must confess, that I felt more Horror at the Execrations of our Commander, than from the mountainous Waves that seemed about to overwhelm us. Under such Circumstances, is it not astonishing, that Profaneness
should

should prevail? And that the Wretch, who has abundant Reason to apprehend, that the next Blast will precipitate him into a boundless Eternity, can be devoid of every Concern, but the Preservation of his Body? Such a Conduct is a Reproach to human Nature.

We have a small cruising Vessel along with us at present; she is come out to reconnoitre, and will return in a Couple of Days: It is by her Means, that I am enabled to break off, and return to my Epistle, as if I was in Reach of a Post-house. The Damage she sustained in the Storm, will oblige her to make for *Plymouth* with all possible Expedition.

Let us, my *Caroline*, indulge the pleasing Hope, that our present Disappointments

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appointments and Mortifications will,
at some future Period, furnish us with
entertaining and interesting Winter
Tales; that our Taste for rational Fe-
licity will be quickened by the Acid
we have experienced, and that, as the
Morning of our Days has been cloudy
and unpleasant, a happy Calm awaits
their Meridian and Decline.

I transmit you a feeble Effort of the
Muse, from a Persuasion that, if your
Judgement should condemn the *Poetry*,
your Candour will approve the *Senti-*
ment. If this should be the Case, the
chief Purpose of my Heart will be an-
swered—for, believe me, my dearest
Caroline, I had much rather be remem-
bered by you under the Character of a
good Man, than that of a *good Poet*.

A Winter's

A Winter's Thought.

I.

WHAT tho' the Sun withdraws its Ray,
And Clouds bedark the Sky?
Yet soon shall Winter steal away,
And Spring salute the Eye.

II.

But, ah! when Wintry Age draws on,
A dreary Scene's in Store!
Life's Sun, that warm'd the Heart, is gone,
And Spring returns no more.

III.

Then oh! before that Sun goes down,
And sets in endless Night,
Come, Wisdom, with thy starry Crown,
And guide my Steps a-right.

IV.

IV.

Thee, Virtue, too, celestial Maid!

Tby choicest Blessings bring:

Life, then, tho' sunk in Winter's Shade,

Shall wear the Bloom of Spring.

Storms and Tempests, in the elementary World, are what Sickness and Misfortunes are to the human. The former, by their Power, drive and expel all noxious Vapours from the Atmosphere; the other, every gross Affection, and inordinate Desire from the Heart.

No Age is secure from the Blasts of Affliction: *July* is no less subject to Thunder-Storms, than *December* to Hurricanes; but if Providence is so gracious as to preserve you from Evil,
and

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 21

and your Heart from changing, the
common Misfortunes of Humanity
will be lightly felt by,

Dear Madam,

Your most affectionate

HORATIO FOSTER.

The Gold and Silver Age is re-
stored in my Imagination! The whole
Creation smiles! *Nell* and I tripped
over Sir *Ralph's* Lawn like Fairy
Queens. The gentle Savage is de-
lighted at the Alteration in my Dis-
position. Ah! Madam, said she,
who could have conceived you capa-
ble of such Vivacity? Your late
Dejection of Spirits frequently gave
me infinite Pain. Something, it was
apparent,

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apparent, hung heavy upon your Mind; but that Letter, that happy Letter you received Yesterday, has dispelled the Cloud for ever, I hope, from your Brow. Indeed, *Nelly*, I replied, you are very right in your Conjectures; the News that Letter conveyed to me, has rendered my Heart quite gay and volatile. The very Birds, Child, seem to congratulate me. Nay, do not think me Mad; but the fanning Breezes, and the blooming Flowers, seem all to partake my unspeakable Satisfaction.

The innocent Girl stared at my unintelligible Raptures—I was resolved to increase her Consternation.—Was you ever in Love?—Dear Madam! exclaimed the pretty Innocent,

nocent, and blushed so fillily!—You have heard of such a thing, however? I said. I acknowledge, replied the ingenuous Novice, that I have both heard and read of such an Inclination, but hope I shall never know it experimentally. Why, my good Girl, said I? Because, rejoined she, it occasions so disagreeable a Change in People's Tempers. Sometimes they are petulant, sometimes fullen, seldom in good Humour. Dear me, how my Sister *Jenny* will cry sometimes, without having met with the least apparent Cause for Uneasiness or Vexation!

Upon my Word, *Nell*, said I, you are a nice Observer. Perhaps you may have remarked the very same Changes in me, you have just mentioned.

mentioned. Why, indeed, my dear Miss *Stretton*, replied she, to speak the Truth, I really have. Very well, returned I; and so you really conclude I am under the Dominion of that mischievous and simple Passion? Ah! Madam, said she, you are very arch—but I will not suffer myself to be laughed out of my Opinion.—This I know, that you will never be a Sister of mine.

Would you wish me to marry *Roger*? said I. Not for the World, replied she hastily—Notwithstanding he is my Brother, I am far from being blind to his Imperfections. He is as little indebted to Nature for Accomplishments, as he is to Art for Education. I question if he can write his own Name.

I send

I send you this little Specimen of my Companion's Turn and Understanding. You will possibly think I am not so much to be pitied, as I would make you believe; but observe, I only complain of her green Age, and barbarous Name; take the rest of her, and, I do assure you, she is one of Nature's Prodigies.

But do not imagine that Joy, at the News of my *Horatio's* Health and Safety, has absorbed every other Sensation of my Heart—no; it most sensibly feels for poor *Letitia's* declining State. Nothing is so efficacious, in such Cases as Change of Air. *Warwickshire*, perhaps, may have an happy Effect—let not the Experiment be delayed. I have recovered my

Chearfulness, and, by diverting her drooping Mind, may prove above half her Cure.

Retain your strange Brother, in the only Town where he will find Beings to keep him in Countenance—his Vices would glare so strongly in this Village, that he who runs would read them.

Send me Lord *Roxburgh*—he will do us Honour—I promise you I shall now appear to Advantage. Perhaps may eclipse—but no Matter—I shall be cruel. I will not rob you of his Person, but, you know, if the silly Fool will throw away his Heart, how can I help it?

The Spirit and Vivacity of my Aspect is irresistibly attractive—I should

should tremble for his Repose. On second Thoughts, you had better not trust him, until he is fairly noosed; a little Affair of Gallantry will then be *Alamode de Paris*—I would not wish to proceed farther.

Whence, ah! my Dear, whence all this Folly? *Horatio*, the Source, or rather the Awakener of it, may be, perhaps, at the Moment I am indulging the Levity of my Heart, in the last Extremity! Yet why should I render myself miserable by Anticipation? Are not Misfortunes sufficiently acute in themselves, that we thus industriously aggravate them? How many Beings deprive themselves, by their own dissatisfied Imaginations, of Half the Happiness that

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is really within their Reach? I will not suffer myself to be of that Number. The Felicity Providence is pleased to deal out to me, I will enjoy; and the Calamity I cannot shun, I will endeavour to soften by patient Resignation.

I think I had better conclude in this present State of my Mind—for so frail am I, that I know not what Change the ensuing Moment may produce, except rendering me any other than your affectionate Friend.



and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 29

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.*

WHAT Destruction has not my unhappy Form occasioned? Poor *Roger*! I, indeed, apprehended, there was no withstanding the Blaze of my Charms. Pity I did not live in the good old Times, when such Beauty, as I possess, would have immortalized one's Name! Who knows but it might have run thus? "Who caused a ten Year's War, and laid old *Troy* in Ashes?" *Caroline Stretton*. "Who lost *Mark Anthony* the World?" *Caroline Stretton*. Well, but pray, which of these Heroines would I chuse to have been? Hum—

C 3

I really

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I really cannot say that either of the Characters are eligible. Madam *Helen* was an Adultress, and Mrs. *Cleopatra* was—Oh monstrous! Well then, the Question is, am I satisfied with only performing the little Mischief I am capable of? Why, except the Reduction of Lord *Roxburgh*, I think I am. I fear I shall find his Heart strongly fortified—It would mortify one if, after one had bombarded and cannonaded for some Time, one should be obliged to raise the Siege. I must, however, try his Strength, by playing off a few small Shot; and should I find a vigorous Repulse, I will e'en retreat, without erecting attack Batteries, &c.

Nell

Nell and I are returned from a sweet Walk; though, I confess, the Boor, her Brother, has somewhat disconcerted me—The *Russian* Bear fastened one of his voracious Paws upon me, gave me an ugly Gripe, darted a furious Look, and growled most hideously. On my Word, I begin to apprehend he will convey me to some dreary Cavern, and oblige me to subsist upon human Prey. Seriously, my Dear, I am alarmed and astonished at his Behaviour.

His agreeable Sister and I had rambled several Hours, without the least Interruption, when, suddenly, *Bruin*, at the Turn of a Walk, popped upon us. I perceived he was heated with Liquor. His Coat and

Waistcoat was unbuttoned, his Hair in lank Disorder, and his Eyes enflamed and rolling.

Ho, ho, said he, fastening his rough Paw upon my Arm, have I caught you? You shall not now slip through my Fingers. Either swear to renounce your Romantic Love for your *East-India* Pilgrim, or I will take Care you shall never meet again; for if you will not make me happy, by *George*, you never shall another Fellow.

Brother, Brother, said the dear frightened Girl, what can you mean by treating Miss *Stretton* with such boisterous ill Manners? Let her go—I am sure you hurt her—do you imagine her delicate Arm was made for such a rough Grasp? Let her go, I say.

Nell,

Nell, Nell, stand off, said the Wretch, or I'll fetch you a Douce of your Chops, that shall make you repent your Prating. Come, Miss, what will you promise, to obtain your Liberty? Every thing you desire Mr. Roger, let but my Arm go, and— One smack then, cried the Monster, to confirm the Bargain; at the same Instant, giving me a Salute that the very Eccho resounded. He then released me, to the inexpressible Joy of my self, and my little Companion.

Faugh! What a Beast? He was just returned from a Horse-Race, stinking of Ale and Tobacco, sufficient to infect the whole Atmosphere.

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My good Uncle and Aunt were highly diverted at our Rencounter; and Roger seemed to consider their Mirth at my Fears, as approving Marks of his Brutality.

To be sure, the Matter is not much, if it rests here; but he has rendered himself so formidable in my Eyes, that I shall never again behold him without a secret Horror.

I am impatient for Accounts of *Letitia's* Health, and your Happiness—do not keep me, I beseech you, long in Suspence.

Lady

Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the

Hon. Miss STRETTON.

I HAVE strange News for you, my *Caroline*—my Brother has occasioned me much Uneasiness—but I know you love Particulars, therefore, take the Matter as it happened.

The sweet Lord *Desborough*, alias my dear Brother, has been, for a long Time, vastly assiduous to recommend himself to *Letitia's* Favour—his Bottle is forsaken, his Conversation refined. I observed her Behaviour, with the utmost Circumspection, and had the Pleasure to find it agreeable to my

C 6

best

best Wishes. It is true she listened to him with unwearied Compliance; but, was he not my Relation, as a Man, or a Lover, she did not seem to bestow the slightest Consideration upon him.

He, nevertheless, apparently plumed himself upon the little Favour he enjoyed, and spared no Pains to increase it. I hope I was justifiable, but my Curiosity, to know *Letitia's* real Sentiments, put me upon practicing a Stratagem. Some small Diffimulation was necessary to effect it—and however I highly disapprove of it in general, in this particular Instance, I descended to make Use of it—Lord *Roxburgh* was in the Plot.

I told

I told *Letty*, that she must give me Leave to go to *Ranelagh* with some Friends; that I would be absent as short a Time as possible, and would never again trespass upon her good Nature, during her Continuance in Town.

She rebuked me with ineffable Sweetness, for treating her with so much Ceremony; assured me she should pass an happy Evening from Sympathy, and begged she might assist in dressing me for the Occasion.

My dear *Letty*, returned I, you forget, that it must be your Part to entertain my Brother, in my Absence—you know he is indisposed (he had artfully complained of his
Head,

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Head, in order to disengage himself) he is unaccustomed to spend his Hours alone, and, you know, the Men are the most vapoured fanciful Beings on Earth, when any thing is the Matter with them.

I perceived she changed Countenance. Ah! Madam, said she, cannot my Company be dispensed with? Lord *Desborough* has many Acquaintance—But not one, *Letitia*, I replied, that is proper to be trusted with him, under his present Circumstance. A Fit of Intemperance might throw him into a Fever, and hasten his End. You know how unprepared he is for such an Event, and surely you will not hesitate to save the Brother of your *Louisa*?

You

You have put it out of my Power, Madam, answered the grateful Girl, to refuse you; though I own, there is nothing Lady *Louisa Stroud* could request, that I should so reluctantly comply with. Is it such a Sacrifice, then, returned I, to spend a few Hours, tête à tête with a sprightly young Fellow, who admires you? Dear Madam, said she, do not wound me, by the Recollection, how little I merit even Compassion! This Language is but ill-adapted to my mortified State. Admiration! No; my utmost Ambition is to escape Insult. — Retain but these Sentiments, *Letitia*, and every thing is your Due.

These

These Preliminaries adjusted, I dressed before Dinner, in order to give my Brother a long Afternoon to plead his Cause in. He forgot his Indisposition several Times; not from any Difficulty he found in playing the Hypocrite, but merely from Heart's-Ease and Delight.

At length the happy Hour arrived, that was to deprive him of all Restraint — Lord *Roxburgh* came to conduct me — not to *Ranelagh*, but into the Closet that adjoins the Dining-Room; the Parting Wainscot of which is so slight, that you over-hear every Conversation as distinctly as if you was absolutely engaged in it.

We had been seated some Time, upon a Settee, which I had conveyed there

there the preceding Day, and placed advantageously, before the *bashful* Lord *Desborough* had the Confidence to break the deep Silence. At length ; Madam, I think my Sister does Honour to her own Heart, in an eminent Degree, by a due Estimation of your great Merit — The last Sentence almost died away in the Pronunciation.

Sir, answered *Letitia*, I find the Brother, no less than the Sister, kindly exaggerates the small Merit I am possessed of. But if they could have a more intimate Knowledge of my Heart, they would find it by no Means replete with those amiable Qualifications, that are the Characteristics of true Merit.

Ah ! Mrs. *Sampson* (the Name our Friend is known by in *London*) how
happy

happy must that Man be, cried my Brother, with great Emotion, who had a legal Pretension to the first Place in that Heart you mention so unworthily?

Will Cards, Sir, said *Letitia*, be any Amusement to you? Will you give me Leave to challenge you at Piquet? —No, Madam, returned my Brother, pardon me if I disclaim the Toys you would recommend—they may be pretty Weapons to *kill* Time withal, but I would wish to *prolong* these valuable Moments. Shall I, who have so impatiently desired the very Happiness Chance has now given me, throw it away upon Trifles? You must permit me to solicit an Interest in your Favour—an Interest of the highest Consequence

quence to me of any thing on Earth. My Hand, my Heart, my Fortune, are at your Command. I do not enquire into your Circumstances; the narrower they are, the more I shall rejoice at having it in my Power to convince you, that my Affection for you is superior to every fordid Consideration.

Sir, replied *Letitia* (*I was sorry I could not behold her Countenance at that Juncture, her Accent was so strangely pathetic*) I am no less amazed at your Generosity, than concerned that it is not in my Power to make you other Returns than Thanks. The Compliment you have paid me is a Demand upon my Sincerity that shall be answered. I cannot take upon me to judge what my Inclination would dictate

44 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

dictate, as my Circumstances are a Bar to their ever being consulted: Be satisfied, Sir, that it is inconsistent with my Honour, my Prudence and Integrity, to listen to your Addresses; that there is a horrid Mystery in my Fate, that it would give me Pain to reveal. Therefore, let me conjure you to change your Purpose. Wish me well, wish me Composure—for, ah! Happiness is beyond my Reach!—I am disordered; excuse my continuing any longer with you.

By Heavens, Madam, exclaimed my Brother, I cannot part with you. You have made me shudder with Horror and Astonishment. What can your Words imply? You are a Widow, I know; but must your
dissolved

dissolved Vows be adhered to? I am confounded, afflicted—For Gods Sake explain your self. Yet do not, Sir, insist—She was going on, when he, in a soothing Accent, said, I will not give you Pain—but you shall be mine—I will admit of no Objections.

Louisa shall be my Advocate. Her Brother's eternal Happiness is of too much Consequence with her to be neglected. You have the Power of reforming me, saving me from Perdition: Consider that, and what you will not do for Love, consent to undertake out of Charity—I repeat, you shall be mine.

Alas! Sir, answered the afflicted Girl, why will you oblige me to undeceive you? It is a cruel Task! Yet

I will

46 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

I will submit to it, since there is no other Remedy. Why will you not save me the Confusion of publishing my own Shame? But you will not. Then, Sir, behold a ruined, wretched Creature, sheltered by your humane Sister, from the World's Insult, the Consequence of Guilt. I have no Husband, never had one; and the poor Child, born in, and buried out of, this House, belonged to a Man, that has a Wife and eleven Children.—Tears prevented her proceeding.

I was affected, shocked—could scarce refrain from shewing myself; but Lord *Roxburgh* advised me, to listen what Effect this Information had upon my Brother.

A Silence

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 47

A Silence ensued.—I retire, said *Letitia*, never to behold you more.

After a few Moments Pause, he broke out into this Exclamation. Is it possible?—Was that fair Face, that Form Angelic made to bear the Brand of Infamy?—Perdition seize the Villain! He then walked about like a frantic Man; and we, judging the tragic Farce was come to a Catastrophe, took Advantage of his Lordship's Confusion to decamp unperceived.

We did, indeed, drive to *Ranelagh*, but continued in the Room only one Half Hour. My Brother was invisible at our Return, as well as *Letitia*. He made large Complaints of his Head; and though it was evident his
Dilorder

48 *History of Lady Louisa Stroud,*

Disorder was heart-felt, I affected to believe and condole with him.

I then sought *Letitia*, whom I found in her own Apartment. She related the Conversation she had with my Brother, *verbatim*, and concluded, with intreating me to return her to her rural Asylum.

Oh, Madam, said she, I was never thoroughly sensible of the Injury I have sustained, until this very Afternoon. I confess I am not insensible to the Merits of your Brother's Character—he can resemble Lady *Louisa* if he pleases. Had I been so happy, as to have known him before I went into *Wales*, it is not impossible—But I am conscious of my Unworthiness, and dare
to

to condemn myself with equal Severity to the World.

Amiable *Letitia*! I replied, I admire your Sentiments! Do not let Dejection impair such a Mind as yours. Your Sin is certainly attoned, by your Repentance. Deprive me not, therefore, of your Friendship, though the Laws of Honour and Delicacy forbid your ever becoming my Sister.

What think you now, *Caroline*? Could such a Girl aim at pleasing Mr. *Foster*? It was a narrow Thought.

I congratulate you upon the News you have received of that worthy Man, and (if you will permit me to sink from him to *Roger*) your De-

liverance from the Bear's Paw—I hope you will guard against ever coming into his Clutches again.

What a Volume have I composed? The Loves of *Stanley Desborough*, and *Roger Craiton*, really make a pretty Romantic Figure in our Epistles.

I expect, in return, a Letter of important Occurrences from you; for, surely, considering how much I have wrote this Time, you are greatly in Arrear.



Lady

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 51

Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.

Miss STRETTON.

AH! my Friend, such Confusion! Such Anxiety! Good God! That ever such a Misfortune should happen? My Brother has carried off *Letitia*. Lord *Roxburgh* is so cruel as to imagine, not without her own Consent; but I abjure the Thought—she is incapable of such a Step. Would we had never known her! What endless Perplexity has this one Connexion brought upon us? No Conception, no Apprehension of such a Design—judge of my Surprise, when I returned from Church, to find the House in Confusion, and my

Brother and *Letitia* fled? Where can they be gone?—What can be their Scheme?—Will she marry him, think you? Will she—I know not what I write, nor what to think.

Four o'Clock.

No News of them—no Trace have they left behind them—I am half distracted.—Yet why this Disquietude? If she is gone off with her own Consent, she is unworthy the least Regard; if she has been deluded, my Brother cannot sure be so brutal, as to take a base Advantage of having her in his Power. Ah! My Dear, who would forfeit their Virtue, if they did but consider the boundless Censures they incur by it? It is the grand
Barrier

Barrier against every Vice ; nor can we conceive that the Mind of a Woman that has been once vitiated, can ever recover the slightest Degree of Honour. Despised by the Men, and shunned by the Women, who could bear it? Nay, the keenest Mortification is the Reflection of sinking into Contempt, even with the Wretch that has effected her Seduction.

If an idle Life is the Attraction, how is her Purpose defeated? Can any Labour equal the being obliged to give into all Kinds of Excess from the very Nature of a prostitute Profession?

Does the Love of Dress allure?
To what End does the abandoned

54 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

sparkle with Jewels, only the more strikingly to expose her Infamy, and excite the Finger of Derision and Scorn to be pointed at her?

Is it the Desire of shaking off the Restraint of Friends, Relations, Guardians? How vain the Wish! She, indeed, exchanges one Restraint for another—instead of the friendly honest Admonition, or Restriction of her experienced Protectors, she must dread the frowning Brow, or reproaching Voice of her stern Keeper, whose every Sensation, absorbed by Sensuality alone, is incapable of either Candour, Generosity or Humanity.— A copious Subject, *Caroline*, but I will quit it.

Sunday

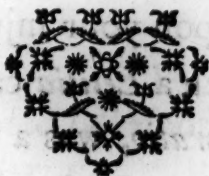
And the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 55

Sunday Night.

I have passed this whole Day in the most disagreeable Uncertainty—I flattered myself I should have been able to unravel this dark Affair, before I dispatched my Letter; but you may depend upon the earliest Accounts from

Your

LOUISA.



D 4

The

56 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD.*

The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

WHAT is it you tell me, *Louisa*? *Letitia* eloped? Impossible! That daring Brother of yours must have practised some black Artifices. What! Does your Faith stagger, notwithstanding the severe Test you brought her Resolution and Prudence to? Fye, *Louisa*! Yet, how I admire your Dexterity, in casting Reflections upon your injured Friend! To suspect such a *Letitia* capable of Designs upon *Horatio*, was a narrow Sentiment—Excellent Reformer! but take Notice I have the Advantage of you here. Your Brother, the Honourable

ble Earl of *Desborough*, has descended to low Schemes, base Subterfuges, and infamous Falsehoods. If I do him Injustice, pull my Cap for me; but if I am right in my Conjectures, all the Satisfaction I insist upon is, that you will, hereafter, allow me the Precedence in Charity and Discernment.

Poor, unhappy Girl! What Persecutions may she not endure? And yet was your Brother, by the most cruel Threats, or severest Measures on Earth, to gain his wicked Purpose, I foresee, that the chief of the Blame would fall upon the weakest, the miserable *Letitia*.

Did I not tell you, that the idle Frankness, the Romantic Open-

58 *History of Lady Louisa Stroud,*

ness of Disposition she possesses, would, one Time or other, lead her into a Snare?

Silly Creature! that could not find in her (too tender) Heart, to refuse a Fellow, it was not convenient she should accept, without letting him into the whole Secret of her Affairs!

This ugly Business has quite disconcerted a pretty Plan I had formed, of endeavouring to bring a Match to bear, between *Nell* and your hopeful Brother; but I now forbid the Banns; I assure you, she deserves a much better Fate, than being Countess of *Desborough*—I mean, with such a Count.

Ah!

Ah! I remember there was a Time when you wanted me to behold your beloved *Stanley* with an Eye of Favour—but, no; I read him in his true Characters—no Libertines for me. Oh, *Horatio*, *Horatio*, how infinitely do you rise in my Opinion, on the Comparison? Adieu, adieu, *Louisa*. Had you sent *Letitia* back, as I desired you, this Mortification had not been brought upon us.



*Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.
Miss STRETTON.*

A LAS! *Caroline*, your Vivacity is ill-timed—my Brother is *not*, and yet he *is* to blame; but poor *Letty* is the Victim. I have discovered the whole Affair; a black one it is, indeed.

He spent the succeeding Day to *Letitia's* making him privy to her unhappy Circumstances with your Favourite Mr. *Hornton*, the Atheist, you so justly contemned and descried. The Dejection of *Stanley's* Spirits was too soon perceived by his quick-sighted Friend.

Hornton

Hornton repeatedly solicited my Brother to intrust him with the Cause of his evident Chagrin, and offered him his best Assistance to remove it.

Stanley acknowledges that *Letitia's* Behaviour inspired him with so great a Respect for her, notwithstanding he was unacquainted with Particulars, that, for her Sake, he evaded, for a long Time, *Hornton's* Importunity; but being got into the third Bottle, his Cares rather augmented than decreased, he could contain it no longer, but gave the Wretch an ample Account of his Uneasiness and its Source.

Hornton rallied him excessively upon his Squeamishness; assured him the
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Girl

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Girl was by no Means obliged to him for it; that what he called Ingenuoufness (pray observe these Men, my Dear) was only an Invitation of him to the same unshackled Familiarities; and that he would lay a thousand Pounds to five hundred, that he reduced her to Reason in one poor Week.

My Brother took him up; five hundred to a thousand was instantly betted, and a Bottle immediatly dispatched in wishing Success to the Cause.

Horton insisted upon my Brother's leaving Town for a few Days, alledging, that *Letitia* would be shy in his Presence. *Stanley* complied with this Proposal,

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 63

Proposal, which occasioned our Suspicions to fall upon him.

The very Day my Brother left London, I was obliged to dine with a Lady from Bath. Letty seemed very low-spirited at our parting—How little did we conceive what fatal Consequences would ensue?

Stanley's Servant was to be the Go-between. He accordingly informed Hornton of my Engagement. I had not been gone above an Hour, before a Porter was dispatched by Hornton, with Orders to affect great Confusion, and to desire to speak with Mrs. Sampson. The assisting Lacquey was in the Secret, and prepared for his Reception. Letitia was in the Parlour; the Porter was introduced, who informed

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formed her, that my Carriage was overturned, that I was taken into a Haberdasher's Shop much frightened, and it was feared not a little hurt; and that I conjured her to come to me immediatly.

The kind, inconsiderate Girl, made no Hesitation, but put herself hastily into a Hackney Coach the Fellow had procured, and ordered it to drive with the utmost Expedition to *Charing Cross*.

The Coachman had his Lesson; he drove her to a *Bagnio*, where *Hornton* presented himself, handed her out, told her, her Friend, Lady *Louisa*, was very ill, and had been ordered, by a Physician, to be put to Bed; and that there being no
Convenience

Convenience at the Haberdasher's, she had been moved from thence to the House they were then in. The poor Soul was doubly alarmed at this Intelligence. My God! said she, how little did I apprehend this great Misfortune? The best Friend I ever had will, perhaps, soon be no more!

They now entered an Appartment; *Letitia* cast her Eyes eagerly around, and asked, where is her Ladyship? Good Madam, be seated, said the Sycophant; you are too much discomposed for the Occasion—you have no sick Friend here, but have been amused with that Tale, for a more agreeable Purpose than you can imagine.

What

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What can have induced you, Sir, cried the frightened Girl, to take this Liberty with me? Could not my weak State of Health secure me against such barbarous Trifling? But I will flatter myself, that your Honour is superior to your Humanity, and that, notwithstanding you have, by an unworthy Stratagem, allured me into your Power, that you will not make a cruel Use of it.

Oh, dear Madam, answered the Wretch, you may depend upon finding me a Man of strict Honour. Who could be so inhuman, as to betray such Beauty and Innocence? I beg then, Sir, replied she, if you really mean me well, that you will not longer detain me. *Lady Louisa* may return, and suffer

suffer no small Degree of Anxiety on my Account. You merit her most tender Regard, said he, sneeringly. But, Madam, I understand you have been in *Wales*. I have, Sir, answered *Le- titia*, upon a Visit, at a certain Baro- net's—you have not been mis-informed. —You was a great Favourite with that Gentleman, was you not? said the in- sulting Monster. Do not distress me, Sir, importuned the afflicted Girl, if you are acquainted with any Particu- lars relative to me, do not wound me by a Repetition. I would forget my past Life. You astonish me, Madam, said he: Can so virtuous a young Lady have taken one Step, that the Recol- lection of it can wound either her De- licacy or Peace? Your Behaviour, Sir, observed

observed *Letitia*, has a Meaning in it—
Pray, Sir, explain yourself.

Then, Madam, said the Wretch,
not to multiply Words, I have a
Friend that loves you tenderly, and
would not have hesitated to share his
Fortune with you, had not your Ge-
nerosity destroyed his Intention. I
presume you understand me?—Ah!
Sir, too well, answered she, sighing.—
His Affection for you, Madam, cried
the artful Villain, has been abundantly
increased by your amiable Ingenuity.
His Repose is hinged upon your con-
senting to live with him at one of his
Country Seats, as his Companion and
Friend. He has no Tye or Engage-
ment to impede your Acceptance of
him, in the Characters I have men-
tioned,

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 69

tioned, but can devote both his Heart and Person entirely to you. His Respect for you was so great, that he could not reveal his desired Purpose himself, for which Reason I undertook the Business, and flatter myself I shall be intitled to your mutual Thanks.

I am sorry, Sir, returned the unhappy Girl, that you should so far deceive yourself, as to imagine me capable of listening to such an unworthy Proposal. My Misfortunes, that, it seems, has encouraged you to act this extraordinary Part, is a poor Presumption. I was betrayed into that Crime by a strange Fatality of Events, and an early Age, that will plead for me hereafter; though nothing can wipe off my Guilt in the too severe Sight of the World.

As

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As there is no Hardship I would not suffer to regain my lost Virtue, so there is no Calamity I will not chearfully endure to prevent any farther Pollution. My Existence is near a Termination; my Injuries and Infamy will then both sink into Oblivion, until the Day of Retribution, when, perhaps, I shall appear in a more favourable Light, than I can ever hope to do on Earth. You surely are incapable of cutting off, by new Sorrows, the few Months I may otherwise pass in tolerable Serenity, by the kind Indulgence of my valuable Friends.

The Villain confessed he was shocked by her Steadiness, though not convinced by her Arguments. He little apprehended there was so much Truth

in

in her prophetic Words, with Respect to her declining Health, and proceeded, to take some cruel Liberties with the unhappy Girl. Her Resentment exhausted her little remaining Strength; successive Faintings were the Consequence. Terrified at her apparent Danger, he sent for a Physician, who declared, that Nature was quite decayed, and that a few Days, alone, would put a Period to her Life.

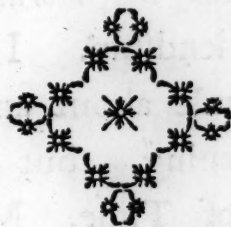
She revived for a Moment or two, and earnestly entreated to be re-conveyed to my House. Then, said she, I could close my Eyes with Satisfaction. You will not, surely, Sir, deny me this Request? The Physician was again consulted; he absolutely forbade
her

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her being removed, saying, it was almost a Certainty she would expire on the Way.

A Messenger was then dispatched to me—I was to have dined out, as I informed you; but, recollecting something I had to say to *Letitia*, I returned Home from Church, and was too much discomposed at the News of her Elopement, to be fit for Company; I therefore shut myself up the whole Remainder of the Day, and it was not till between Nine and Ten at Night, that I received *Hornton's* incoherent Note. I immediately complied with the dear Girl's Request, and she insisted on my taking down these Particulars, collected from herself and *Hornton*, as a Testimonial of her Innocence.

cence. I have left my Woman to set up with her, and shall be with her early in the Morning ; but I greatly fear she will not stand in need of many Visits. Adieu, my *Caroline*, I never, till Now, was truly sensible of those emphatic Words of Instruction—**BE VIRTUOUS, AND BE HAPPY.**



The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

AH! *Louisa*, surely you are dilatory in remitting me Advices of the poor Run-away—I dread, yet earnestly desire, Particulars—If she is culpable, farewell all Dependence upon Mortality—I question if I shall not even doubt my *Horatio's* Truth, and your Friendship. I will not, however, puzzle about an incomprehensible Meaning, but commit it to the Lap of Time. My Charity, to *Letitia*, is still predominant; she must be innocent, and your Brother the most unworthy of his Species.

We

We are all upon the stiff Order at the *Abbey*. I resent *Roger's* Impertinence—*Roger* is fullen, impenitent and troublesome—*Nell* is kind, officiously wrathful, with Respect to the Russian, and full of Concern at his present, as well as past, Behaviour. Sir *Ralph* and his Lady are acquainted with the Merits of the Cause, and give it intirely in my Favour; are very strenuous with Bruin to beg my Pardon; but the Beast is refractory and incorrigible—whether we shall tame him or not, is a Question.

Bless me! a whole Pacquet—*Stanley* acquitted, poor *Letitia* exculpated, and that Wretch *Hornton*, alone, the Incendiary and Perpetrator of all the Mischief! I really am vastly afflicted,

E 2

but

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but it would be idle to conjure you to omit no kind Care to revive the drooping injured Girl, as I am sensible you are as well disposed towards her as myself. If she should recover, do not expose her to any farther Attempts; let her come down under the Convoy of Lord *Roxburgh* and your Brother, and I and *Nell* will sooth her into Health and Peace.

What will your Brother say, when he is acquainted with this base Transaction? I wish it is not productive of endless Mischief. Hurry him into the Country; *Nell* must infallibly captivate him, and consequently divert his Thoughts from more masculine Pursuits.

If

If I was to suffer Self-love to be predominant, I should wish we had never known this afflicted Girl; but when I consider the Services we have rendered her, at a Time when others would have shewn her a contracted Brow, the little Sentiment vanishes.

I shall be very anxious for the Catastrophe of this horrid Affair. Do not keep me in Suspence, one Moment longer than is inevitable; and you will contribute to restore the Satisfaction of your *Caroline's* Heart.

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Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the
Hon. Miss STRETTON.

THE Tragedy, my Dear, is finished — *Letitia's* Tears are for ever wiped away.

It is undoubtedly a happy Change for her; we may regret her Loss, if we could be capable of wishing the Misery of a Fellow-Creature prolonged. The Grave was the only peaceful Mansion she could find. We, indeed, relieved some few glaring Necessities, but our Kindness could not extract the Sting of a wounded Conscience, or heal her injured Innocence,

The

The grim Messenger was slow in his Approaches. She retained her Reason, unimpaired, to her latest Breath; and besought me not to fail making her best Remembrances to you.

She has left each of us a Ring, as a Token, she said, of her Gratitude; and five hundred Pounds to the good Parson and his Wife. Their Circumstances were not so perfectly easy, but that a trifling Addition must be acceptable. I owe, said she, every thing to them, and to the humane Friendship of your Ladyship, and Miss *Stretton*. Tell the last good Lady, that if there is Efficacy in the departing Prayers of a Sinner, Mr. *Foster* will return in Safety,

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to reward her Constancy with Happiness.

I will draw a Veil over this melancholy Scene. *Hornton's* irreligious Tenets are somewhat staggered—he is silent, meditative, and perplexed. Poor *Stanley* did not arrive till after *Letitia's* Departure; I never saw him so afflicted in my Life. We concealed all disagreeable Particulars from him, which was no difficult Matter, as I had the Body conveyed to my House as soon as possible. He talks of revisiting *Italy*; but I hope to persuade him to take a different Rout. You, my Friend, will, I am confident, for your *Louisa's* Sake, endeavour to restore him to Chearfulness—perhaps

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 81

haps your fair Companion may do Wonders.

I beseech you to spare me every Mortification in your Power—my Spirits will not bear the slightest Reproach. Could I have foreseen the Consequence of *Letitia's* Continuance in *London*, I would have hired *Revel's* Machine and sent her down into *Warwickshire*, some Time ago—but it is now too late—I must provide another Conveyance—the last she will ever stand in need of. Adieu.

*Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.
Miss STRETTON.*

MY Brother will leave *London* To-morrow. I have prevailed upon him to make you a Visit; but Lord *Roxburgh's* Tenderneſs would not permit him to quit *Groſvenor Square* at preſent. I did not wiſh to detain him—it is a voluntary Act—but does not loſe its Merit with me. Pray write to me as ſoon as he arrives, and inform me of his and your Health. I am not in a ſcribbling Vein—it is ſeldom I deal out ſuch Scraps—but muſt beg this once to be indulged by my beloved *Caroline*.

The

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.*

I HAVE paid a small Tribute to the Memory of our poor Friend. Soft rest her Dust—but I will not afflict the afflicted.

Your Brother arrived safe last Night. An agreeable Dejection (if I may so call it) overspreads his Countenance. The innocent *Nell* seemed to behold him with uncommon Complacency. *He* sighed, *She* sighed.—Sympathy, you know, my Dear, is very powerful—I shall observe them with particular Attention.

Roger was mute as a Mackerel; the Conversation was such as he was

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incapable of bearing a Part in, common Sense being, by no means, the Characteristic of a Fox-hunter. I wish he may not take it into his Head to be jealous. He was apparently dissatisfied at the Reception I gave your Brother—asked the Servants (his darling Companions) if he was a Relation? And, on being answered in the Negative, muttered some unintelligible, discontented Sentences.

You need be under no Apprehensions for your Brother's Safety, for I promise you Bruin is incapable of giving, or accepting, any other Challenge than the Bottle.

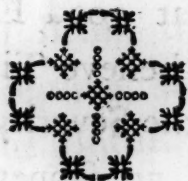
Sir *Ralph* and his Lady behave in that agreeable Manner so peculiar to themselves, and which, you say, is the

the never-failing Result of Integrity and true Politeness. Our Society is unclouded or clogged by Ceremony. A Happiness unknown, or at least un-enjoyed, in public Life.

The good Parson and his amiable Consort philosophize, with the Dignity of pious Resignation, upon *Letitia's* Departure. How difficult it is, my Dear, to acquire this proper Way of thinking? My Heart and Reason subscribe to the Justice of what they advance, though, I confess, it has not altogether that good Effect upon me it ought. I believe Time is the best Remedy for the Severity of Fate; but, alas! we are no sooner convinced of the Certainty of the Dispensations of Providence being truly wise, than we
find,

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find, that the Thread of our few Days is spun, and that our Summons to accomplish the last Scene of our Mortality awaits us; for that Succession of Time that is requisite to awaken us from our Lethargy of Ignorance or Insensibility, leads us on, likewise, to the final Period of our Existence. So temporary are the Moments of our breathing this vital Air, so quick our Return to our primitive Dust!



The

The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

WHAT I foretold is come to pass—Your Brother has so far recovered his Tranquillity, as to suspect (his own Words) that all around is Enchantment.

The Charm is evident; *Nell* bridles, and simpers at *Stanley*; but would persuade you, she is utterly unconscious of her Conquest, pretty Innocent! notwithstanding it is as clear as the Sun at Noon Day. This Attachment has opened a Door of Toleration for all *Roger's* brutal Manners. The Sister's Softness atones for the Brother's

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ther's boisterous Clamour; and all is Harmony at this venerable Seat.

I have observed a growing Intimacy between Bruin and Lord *Desborough's* Valet: They often lay their broken Heads together; but for what wise Purpose I cannot possibly penetrate. *Roger* retails us many smart Specimens of Mr. *Shannon's* Wit, and declares, that he has not met with so *funny* a Fellow this many a Day. I cannot say but I rejoice at this Discovery, as, I hope, it will relieve us from many Hours boarish Persecution.

Your Brother is really greatly improved by his Tour—He is uncommonly entertaining in Conversation, and perfectly free from that Vice you imputed to him on his first Arrival.

He

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 89

He is a Favourite with us all, excepting *Nell*—She never opens her Lips in his Praise; but then she has a Pair of the most intelligent Eyes I ever beheld; and they sparkle with undissembled Approbation upon the happy *Stanley*.

I have a strong Notion Lord *Roxburgh's* Continuance in Town to comfort you, will be productive of an extraordinary Event. When the Mind is softened, then is the lucky Moment. He insinuates himself so irresistibly, that he surprises you to consent to what you little intended. By a gentle Violence, he obtains the Measure of your Finger—has the Temerity to bespeak a little Gold Ring, with a Brilliant Hoop, of an hundred Guineas Price—mentions it to you—mistakes your
Silence

90 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

Silence for Approbation—engages his Relation, the Bishop, to spend an Evening with you—produces, unexpectedly, a special License—you are astonished at his Precipitance—evade, shuffle and cut—but his venerable Relation pleads his Cause so effectually, that you suffer yourself, merely out of a Point of Complaisance, to repeat a few cabalistical Words after him, that, when they come to be explained to you, are, in plain *English*, only a little insignificant Vow, of loving, honouring, and obeying his Nephew, until Death should you part—You are offended at the Imposition—express Resentment—but, upon some little Altercation, are reconciled, dubbed Wife, and I lose my Friend,

Be

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 91

Be upon your Guard, *Louisa*; if the
Mischief is not already accomplished,
you cannot offer for Excuse, that you
was not forewarned of the Plot; nor
should I in the least pity you, if, after
this Notice, it should succeed.



The

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The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

I HAD an early Visit this Morning from your Brother's Flame. I perceived, as soon as she entered my Apartment, that she was brimfull of Intelligence.

Dear Miss *Stretton*, said she, not dressed yet? No, Child, cried I, and what then? Nay, nothing, replied she, and looked very silly. What hast got in thy little Head? resumed I; I'll lay my Life I can guess—Lord *Desborough* has been flattering you; but it is his Way. I hope your Heart is uninspired with any soft Inclinations for him; for, do you know,
Child,

Child, he is engaged to me? The dear Soul could have cried for very Madness—she was amazed, astonished, wondered how I came to think—Why, look you, *Nelly*, said I, I am not a Novice at these Matters: I could perceive that my Lord had made a Conquest, the very Evening he arrived, and pitied your Folly and Weakness exceedingly. You would not have been so soon caught, notwithstanding I grant you he is a very pretty Fellow, if you had ever seen a pretty Fellow before—but it is a great Misfortune to be buried alive, until one attains the Age of Susceptibility. What! not a Word? She sat with her Eyes fixed intensely on the Floor.

When I had finished this mortifying Harangue, she arose with the Dignity

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nity of a Romantic Heroine, and was withdrawing, without deigning to say one Syllable. I was aware of her Design, and, with great Agility, slipped between her and the Door. What! said I, is my good Girl in the Pouts? And was she going to seek her Lover to reproach him for having deceived her? This is the very Quintessence of Ignorance and Rusticity.

Miss *Stretton*, said the little *Hussey*, with great Loftiness, I did not expect this Treatment from you—If you can reconcile it with *Politeness*, you must allow it to be incompatible with *Good-nature*. Had I the same Superiority over you, the Difference of our Education gives you over me,
I think

I think I should not have made this Use of it.

Well, seriously, Child, returned I, you talk very prettily. Love will teach you Eloquence, and Eloquence will gain you Esteem—You are disposed to divert yourself, Madam, said she, angrily; but as a Jest is dull, when the Jester is unkind, so your present Humour has no Beauty for me—I beg only not to be made a Prisoner of. It shall, said I, be set at Liberty, when it has paid the Fine—that is, my Dear, when you have intrusted me with the Secret of your little proud Heart, I will no longer detain you. You know the Terms of your Ransom now.

Bless it! How it fretted? Its Head was tossed up most significantly, but it could

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could not condescend to speak. I locked the Door, pocketed the Key, and seated myself by my Toilet with great Composure.

Finding the little Soul quite obdurate, I said, so you will not communicate? I will then vouchsafe to assure you, that your Approbation of Lord *Desborough* is no Secret, nor his Love for you in the least doubted. Take Courage, Child; I have no Pretensions to him; he is yours, unrivaled for me.

These Words, like Magic, gave an agreeable Turn to every separate Feature; and the dear, really pretty Mouth, spontaneously opened with, How you love to tease one!

But have I not found you out? resumed I: Are not my Conjectures just? Why, to be sure, she replied,

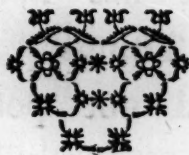
Lord

Lord *Desbarough* had—said a few Things—but she did not give much Credit to them. What Reason, resumed I, have you to doubt his Veracity? Do you take him for a Villain? No: But she had heard, that Men, of even the strictest Honour, in other Respects, did not scruple to compliment, and flatter young Girls. True, returned I, but tell me what he has said. A great many kind Things, she owned; but she could not possibly repeat them.

In short, my Dear, I collected, that your Brother has declared himself in very tender Terms; that *Nell* is highly pleased with him, and that a Match is likely to be the Consequence.

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You see how I endeavour to divert you, by transcribing our simple Chat. Do not let me fail in my desired Purpose. Unless *Louisa Stroud* is happy, *Caroline Stretton* is incapable of being so.



The

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.*

ANOTHER Set of Company, consisting of Males and Females. We are to have a Concert—Nelly is to sing—she has a delicate Voice, but very little Judgment. Your Brother is so very obliging as to teach her the Gamut—she is an apt Scholar—astonishingly quick in taking his Instructions. She loves the Precepts for the Teacher's Sake; and is prouder of his Commendation, than of any other Acquisition upon Earth.

What docile Creatures Men are whilst they are endeavouring to

insinuate themselves into our good Graces? On my Word, if we were but wise, we might make them walk upon their Heads.

I am convinced that a Coquet is not a Child of Nature; for this shy, simple Girl has not the least instinctive Notion of tormenting. Her Temper is naturally sweet and gentle—she delights in obliging, in every other Instance; therefore has no Conception of making an Exception, in Disfavour of her Lover. Not that she implicitly gives up her Opinion. If he advances Tenets she is unacquainted with, she will have them explained to her; and should they prove contrary to her Ideas of Right and Wrong, she constantly appeals to *Lady Stretton's* Judgment (her Oracle)

cle) and abides by her Determination.

She says, she will not trust her Partiality for you Brother, nor my Vivacity; but will call in steadier and more experienced Judges. What! Steadier than *Stanley*? said I, (giving her a penetrating Look.) Yes, Madam, answered she, I will not, yet, consider him as infallible.—Dear *Nell*, I asked, what do you mean by your saving Clause of *yet*? May the Time then come — (a Crimson Suffusion here) Certainly, Madam, returned she gravely, if I ever was to receive him for my Husband, he would be the Arbitrator of every Dispute and Opinion, without Exception, or Reservation.

Ridiculous Girl! replied I; do you think you are to become a Bond Servant? By no other Bond, Miss *Stretton*, answered she, than Respect and Affection; indissoluble Tyes! Antiquated Notions! I exclaimed, they would be no sooner known by the World, than exploded. I will never, she answered, keep such Company, as are Despisers of Propriety—I shall not enter into Life, to destroy my Reason, but enlarge my Understanding.

The little Simpleton! Do you not compassionate her Folly? No; rather, perhaps, instead of making her appear in an absurd Light, to your sober Eye, I am enhancing her Value with you, and supplanting myself

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 103
in your Affections; but, *Louisa*, be
assured, that every County might
give you a Sister, but hardly the
whole Universe such a Friend as

Your

CAROLINE.



F. 4

Lady

Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.

Miss STRETTON.

I RECEIVE your Letters, my *Caroline*, as so many unfeigned Tokens of your Concern for my Satisfaction of Mind. You do, indeed, divert me by your Vivacity, and revive me by your sprightly Raillery. But I must conclude, from your Description, that I have a very dull Genius to deal with; for I can give you my Honour, Lord *Roxburgh* has not attempted any thing of the Nature you have mentioned; he has too much Respect for me, to doubt my Veracity.—I assured him, at the Commencement of our Acquaintance, that I would never change my Condition,

Condition, until a certain Period; and he has the Stupidity to take my Word, nor gives me an Opportunity of receding, by ill-timed Importunity and Solicitation.

You do most assuredly lay the Foundation of Affection for my intended Sister, in my Heart.—I think you too severe upon her—I admire her Temper, her Delicacy, her old fashioned Notions, as you stile them. She is such a Person as I could have wished *Stanley* to chuse, both for his Sake and my own.

I look upon it as a peculiar Happiness for us all, that she has been so fortunate, as to fall into your Hands; her Mind will now be preserved from a wrong Bias, by being apprised of those Vices of Politeness,

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her Inexperience and retired Life
prevented her having any Concep-
tion of.

You will discover the hidden
Rocks of Dissimulation and Hypo-
crisy to her, and be her kind Pilot
on the Ocean of the World. How
might such a Bark of Innocence be
ship-wrecked, before she had the
least Suspicion of Danger? My
Brother will have the same Obligati-
ons to you as myself.

I hope *Stanley* will not be in a
Hurry to bring Things to a Con-
clusion, as a Year or two hence
would be sufficiently early for her
to enter into that important State,
that must determine her future Hap-
piness or Misery.

I am

I am by no Means surpris'd, my Dear, at the many unhappy Marriages we daily see—there are scarce a Couple that engage in that Condition, with a proper Notion of it. They are each of them, in their several Interviews, as much disguised in their Tempers and Behaviours, as they are decorated in their Persons; nor do they once conceive the Object of their Affection to be subject to Sickness, Dis humour or Affliction.

These are Contingences that, generally, have an unhappy Effect—Sickness blasts the captivating Charms, Dis humour hurts the Pride of the neglected Party, and Affliction destroys that Flow of Spirits from which

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they promised themselves Years of uninterrupted Felicity.

A falling off, in these Respects, creates Dissatisfaction and Resentments, Wranglings and Reproaches; and, in the End, often produces irreparable Misery. Instead of endeavouring to heal the Breach, and prevent its transpiring, the Contest is, who shall be most industrious in spreading the Report, and inviting their Neighbour's Derision, and insulting Compassion.

After they have thus madly flown about for some Time, they perceive their Mistake, but it is irremediable—their Influence is at an End, and Contempt and solitary Mortification must be their Lot.

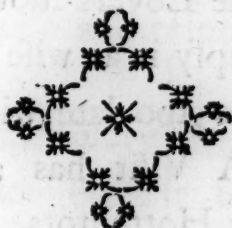
But

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But I shall vapour you with such flat, insipid Themes. Yet, notwithstanding your Squeamishness, you can relish one sober Truth—that I am, with no less Affection than Sincerity,

Your

Friend.



The

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The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

I Red your sententious Epistle to *Nell*—the sly Creature admires your Wisdom—she dares not to acknowledge it in Terms—my Raillery keeps her in Awe ; but I have a never-failing Clue, to the Discovery of her Sentiments.

So, it would be your sanctified Advice, that the Lovers should stay, until this little Gipsy is as wise as yourself ? But you are too late with your sage Council. A Visit has already been made to the Hottentots, their Consent obtained, and the Draught of the Settlements committed to a Limb of the Law.

When

When I had engaged her Attention to your Letter, I commented upon it, Line by Line. You see, Child, said I, my Friend is very glad to accept of you for a Sister, but she recommends it to you, to stay a few Years before you enter into the State of a Matron. She was confounded, stammered out something about my Lord's Impatience—A pretty Excuse!—and hopes you will not impute the quick Dispatch to her. I really am perfectly ill-natured; but I will reform, without a Lecture.

If *Stanley* had delayed his Visit only a few Weeks longer, she had slipped his Fingers; for we have a young Gentleman here that is vastly smitten—would fain pay his Devoirs—but the foolish Girl shuns him, as if she was
afraid

afraid he would carry her off violently.

She might flirt it a little, and no Harm done. It would quicken *Stanley's* Affection—but it is so stupid, there is no making any thing of it.

Why, dear Miss *Stretton*, said she, you would not surely put me upon acting so unworthy a Part, as encouraging the Addresses of one, when I am engaged to another? That would be absolutely playing the Jilt, and I should be deservedly deserted by both.

I tell you, replied I, it would only endear you to my Lord—We know not how to estimate any thing, until we are in Danger of losing it—It would make him look about him. Mortify, teaze him—Do you comprehend me now?

If

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 113

If you was capable, returned she, of giving me this Advice from your Heart, I could not love you; but I know it is all Raillery, only meant to try my Disposition, and I, therefore, rejoice it will bear the Test. Teaze, mortify the Heart I love, whose Happiness is dearer to me than my own? What inconsistent Behaviour!

It is a thousand Pities, said I, that you should be born in these After-times, when all your Heroics will be condemned! In the Days of your Grand-mother and Great Grand-mother, you would, perhaps, have been considered as a pretty, demure, rational Being; but now nothing can be more ridiculous. These are the Contests we are continually engaged in; but
I have

I have not been once victorious.

Roger gives himself up, more and more, to his new Companion. Sir *Ralph*, and his Lady, are much disturbed at it, and would gladly destroy the Connexion; but I, who love Mischief, observe, with Pleasure, the unequal Acquaintance, and really look upon Mr. Valet as the finest Gentleman of the two.

Ah! *Louisa*, it is not near the happy Period of the Ship's returning from *India*! May I not flatter myself, with receiving speedy Accounts of my *Horatio*? Heaven protect him! On his Welfare and Felicity are mine hinged. How will he be shocked when he hears poor *Letitia's* Story?—But I will not enlarge on this melancholy Subject. Adieu, my *Louisa*.

The

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.*

I AM absolutely neither more nor less, than a Go-between—an arrant Match-maker. We have a desperate Misunderstanding at present, and I am engaged as Advocate and Mediator. The Case is this.

We were all rambling the other Day, over Sir *Ralph's* Estate, when we met with several ungain Stiles. *Nell* had her faithful Lover by her Side, and paced the verdant Track with heart-felt Pleasure; when, lo! one of these ugly Boundaries presented themselves! We all gave Proofs of our Dexterity, in surmounting the aukward Impediment, except poor *Nell*, who, in getting

ing over, by the Roguery of her Brother, happened to display rather more of her Instep than was consistent with her far-fetched Notions of Decorum. Lord *Desborough* laughed at her Prudery, which mortified and offended her to such a Degree, that she cried, and declared, she would never speak to him more.

The peremptory Accent with which she pronounced this tremendous Denunciation, chagrined *Stanley*. He protested he had no Conception that she would be angry, and begged her Pardon; but the fair perverse One was not to be intreated.

The Man, she said, that was deficient in Delicacy, she never could approve—As Lord *Desborough* she had no Quarrel with him—but as a Person
she

she was to admit to a particular Share of her Esteem, she had done with him. She found she had mistaken his Character, and should deem it as a fortunate Accident, since it had discovered his real Disposition to her—What a Chit it is !

Your Brother was ready to eat his Nails with Vexation. He intreated her, with all the tender Rhetoric he was Master of, to forgive him this once ; but she remains inexorable, and says, that if he is not delicate from Principle, it will not do for her—assumed Virtues never sit easy — she should despise him for affecting what would engage her Admiration, if it was a natural Possession.

I find I need not have bestowed so many Lessons upon this seeming Innocent,

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cent, in order to inculcate the Art of tormenting. On my Word, she has it naturally, and can, when she pleases, exercise it with a Vengeance.

After all, this same Prudery is a mighty attractive Quality. *Stanley* loves her better than ever, I perceive that—Ah!—she has it—do but throw in a little Difficulty, and you secure them for ever. Had she continued that still, obliging Life, he would never have known her angelic Worth—Pity this Spur did not happen sooner!

We have had a smart Rencounter. She entered, I attacked, but could not conquer. Indeed, my Dear, said I, you now carry your pretty Talent too far—who could have thought you capable of improving so extensively upon the Plan I proposed to you?

I hope

I hope you are now convinced of your Power, and are disposed to relax your Severity?

Miss *Stretton*, answered the little Gipsy, you are determined never to understand the Maxims by which I govern myself. I little imagined, when you gave me such strange Advice, I should ever have met with the Provocation I have since received. It is not, that I am incapable of Resentment, but that I meet with no Offence worth the minding. I never knew, said I, the Particulars of the Story—What was it *Stanley* did to shock your Nicety? He convinced me, replied she, that he does not possess true Modesty, by approving a Breach of it in my Brother. The *Matter*, in itself, might not be exceeding great,
but

but it was the *Manner* that disgusted me. You know the Proverb for those that will not be honest in little? and it holds good in this Respect; for I am persuaded, that those who will be unmindful of a trifling Breach of Decorum, will, by Degrees, become inattentive to absolute Indecencies.

I commend you for persisting, said I; you see it has enhanced your Value, extravagantly, with your Lover. But how will you contrive to descend at last? Let me into the Secret, that I may know how to deal with *my* Swains.

I will acknowledge thus far, Madam, answered she; that my Lord's appearing sensible of his Fault has its Merit with me, and gives me no small Satisfaction. Had he been wholly abandoned,

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 121
abandoned, he would not have betrayed
the least Contrition.

Pretty Distinguisher! exclaimed I.
So you have already opened a Door of
Mercy for him? Oh! your Depths
are hardly fathomable. I despaired of
a Reconciliation's being effected, when
the Business is three Parts accom-
plished. I will seek my Lord, and
make him acquainted with his Hap-
piness.

Hold, Madam, said she; if you are
either my Lord's Friend or mine, do
not interfere in this Matter. Leave
it to Time, Chance, or (if you please)
my Artifice. You would only make
bad worse; for, I will be plain with
you; what I would not grant to Lord
Desborough's Intreaties, shall never be
obtained by officious Raillery.

There's a growing Spirit for you!
 I wish you Joy of your Sister!—I
 wish his Lordship Joy of his Wife!
 If I am not mistaken, she will soon run
 restive; except, indeed, her odd
 Fancies of Duty, Obedience, &c.
 should prove a Curb-Bridle.

How amiable is genuine Propriety
 and Steadiness? This Girl, bred in
 Obscurity, without the Advantages
 of Education, or polite Company, is
 the very Thing one could wish her—
 mature in every valuable Resolution—
 But I will not spoil all by commend-
 ing her. I love

To view her Manners, living as they rise,

Plutarch says, that those have had but
 an ill Education, who have not been
 taught to deny any thing. And I do
 verily

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 123

verily believe, more People have been misled by that false Modesty that will not suffer you to oppose the Humour of your Company, or refuse a Request, however improper, because it is made by a Superior, than by any one other Vice in the whole Catalogue of human Improprieties. How thankful am I, that I am not liable to be misled by this Meteor? Really, *Louisa*, an easy Assurance, or *Nell's* valuable Firmness, are desirable Possessions,



The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

THE falling out of Lovers, says
a *Latin* Songster, is the Renewal
of Love. *Nell*, and your Brother,
are living Evidences of the Truth
of that Assertion. Perhaps, when I
had my *Horatio* with me, I played as
filly a Game as this Pair of Turtles.
But let me tell you, *Louisa*, there is a
sensible Difference between being a
Looker on, and one engaged in Play.
You are so quick-sighted, so clear in
your Judgment, and would have
managed so infinitely superior, had you
but held the Cards, that there is not
a prettier, nor, probably, a more
palpable Deception in Nature.

How

How this grand Reconciliation was effected, I am totally ignorant. I am so far fallen into Disgrace with the dear Creatures, as to be excluded from a Knowledge of their Proceedings.

Natural enough this Treatment! But is it not drole, that an enamoured Swain shall repeatedly solicit you to plead his Cause with his beloved Fair One; that you shall, in Compliance with his Request, talk to Madam pretty roundly, and at last convince her of the Error, and give her Heart a favourable Disposition towards him; that he shall make his Advantage of those encouraging Appearances, you have worked out for him; re-establish himself, by your Means, once more in her good Opinion; and then, instead

of gratefully acknowledging the Obligation you have conferred, listen, with a complaisant Ear, to his Beloved's Representation of some little severe Strokes, which, merely to serve him, were thrown out? And, after all, to square his Countenance and Behaviour intirely by hers, and, unmindful of every other Circumstance than confirming, more strongly, her reconciled Approbation?

I do see clearly, *Louisa*, that of all the Meddlers in the Universe, those who suffer themselves to have any Concern with the Quarrels or Debates of Lovers, either married, or single, are the most ridiculous; as, by the Nature of those interesting Connections, they are incapable of obliging either the one Party, or the other.

Affection, Pride, or some other
pretty

pretty Principle, inclining the sweet Souls, so soon as an Accommodation is effected, to see with the same Eyes, and judge with mutual Partiality, notwithstanding a few Hours before they were endeavouring to excell each other in Acrimony and Virulence.

I hope, my Dear, when you enter into this Condition, of all Conditions the most extraordinary, you will be so prudent, as to prevent your Jars and Discontents from transpiring.

The soft Soothings of Friendship, in such a Case, is but a kinder-Insult; for the Woman that is so indiscreet as not to secure a Friend in the Man she chuses for her Husband, cannot be supposed to have made an unexceptionable Choice amongst her Female Acquaintance.

When we feel our own Minds so weak, as to betray us into that blameable Conduct, of exposing those Faults we ought to skreen from every prying, inquisitive Eye, how can we promise ourselves, but that the Confident, in whose Bosom we lodge those Secrets, in which she has no immediate Concern (and though the utmost Consequence to our Peace and Reputation, we ourselves were unequal to retain) will deal them out to a whole Shoal of Intimates, they to theirs, until they circulate all the Town over, and every Breast is inspired with scornful Pity?

But the very worst Consequence attendant upon this Impropriety is, that you put your Evils beyond a Possibility of Redress; for though many
Husbands,

Husbands, who set out improperly, may be retained by a generous Kindness, we may depend upon it, that by one Complaint against him, we forfeit all our Influence.

A Wife, if discreet and amiable, has a more extensive Power than any other Friend on Earth. The humane Heart may be charmed, when it will not be advised. Soft Persuasion, or dexterous Allurements, throw down the strong Holds of Pride; whilst, on the contrary, Advice, implying a Superiority in those who presume to give it, and Blame-worthiness in those who are required to receive it, seldom has the desired Effect.

A young married Woman, when she finds her Deary froward, refractory, or imperious, flys Home to Mama,

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tells a sorrowful Tale, puts Finger in Eye, and meets with the healing Balm of Compassion in an ample Degree—I will talk to him, says Mama—Spoufey comes in her Way—she attacks him with more Warmth than Discretion—he finds he has no Credit to lose, therefore resolves not to deserve any. He gives a Loose to his Inclination, despises his Home, engages with a Set of unworthy Companions; and, before Mama and young Madam have found out their Error, is become irrecoverably unkind, neglectful and morose.

Ah! my Dear, that half the Women in the County of *Middlesex* could but have the Advantage of perusing this sage Epistle! How infinitely would it conduce to the Good of Society in general?

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and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 131

The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

ARE you not amazed at the Wisdom that flows from my Pen? I believe you was far from thinking me capable of such judicious Reflections. How have Events conspired to draw out my latent Perfections? Had my Life been one dead Calm of uninterrupted Tranquillity, how little would you have known your Friend in her true Character?

The rapid Current of Folly bore me along, my Knowledge superficial, my Resolution weak, how was it possible I could resist? *Horatio* and *Letitia* were the Enlightenings of my Reason, and the Enlargers of my Heart.—but for them I had still flut-

tered, giddy and unthinking, nor once known the Felicity of one solid Sentiment.

You will receive a Letter, by this very Opportunity, requesting yours, and your Lord's Company at the *Abbey*.—Can you guess what is in the Wind? A Messenger has been dispatched to *Bath*, on an important Occasion—great Preparations are on the Carpet—what can all this tend to? Stupid *Louisa*—your Bother's approaching Nuptials.

The whole Plan of Operation is concerted—Sir *Ralph* is to act as Father—Bruin as Bride-man—and your Humble Servant is allotted to be one of the little Hufsey's Bride-maids: Strapping Miss is to be the other, unless you will honour us with your Company.

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 133

Company. It really would be a Day of Joy to me, if it procures a Meeting with my much loved Friend. Do not deny their Request, out of Pity to me. My Expectations, my Wishes, are raised—you have the Power to save them from Disappointment.

I shall impatiently expect your Answer. I feel my Friendship, my Affection, augmented—the Sight of you will give me the highest Satisfaction I am capable of tasting in my dear *Horatio's* Absence. You delight in giving Pleasure in every other Instance, let me not find you deficient in this.

Lady

*Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.**Miss STRETTON.*

IT is painful to me, my *Caroline*, to be under a Necessity of denying you the Request you make, but I have received a Summons from my Mother, to attend her at *Bath*. She approves of my Brother's Choice, and says, she will return earlier to *London*, than she first intended, in order to give her Daughter a proper Reception. You are too well acquainted with *Lady Desborough's* Disposition, not to be assured, that my Journey is indispensable. I depend upon the Goodness of your Heart, to excuse my involuntary Neglect of your Happiness, and for a faithful Account of this
rather

rather sudden Resolution of my Brother.

I have some Reason to apprehend, my Mother will not be altogether so propitious to *my* Choice, as she is to *Stanley's*—You know he was ever her Favourite. Not that I have the least Reason to complain of her Affection; she has been so truly maternal in her Care of me, that it would wound me to the Quick, to take one Step without her Approbation.

I conceal my Apprehensions from Lord *Roxburgh*, as I would not alarm him, on a slight Foundation. I will not marry him, during her Ladyship's Life, without her Consent; but I cannot make that perfect Sacrifice of him to my Duty I, perhaps, ought.

The Time is now approaching, my *Caroline*, when my Philosophy will
be

136 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

be brought to the Test. I fear all the Perfections of my Disposition will, like a Coward's Courage, vanish at the first real Appearance of Danger. I shall not be found in *Practice* what I have been in *Profession*—my Heart misgives me—all the Frailties, the Infirmities of my Temper are roused—and *Louisa Stroud*, in a Calm, will not be the same *Louisa* in a Storm.

We must now, indeed, change Characters. I, that have so long assumed the Privilege of chiding you, must now kiss the Rod of your Correction. Yet why all this Anxiety? The Misfortune I lament is, at present, merely ideal. It is true, my Mother has commanded me down to *Bath*; but does that Action imply Disapprobation for Lord *Roxburgh*? No; but I fear,
because

because I love: Very pretty Reasoning, I must confess.

Ah! *Caroline*, what a Variety of Metamorphoses does humane Nature undergo?—But I cannot moralize.

Was it but your Case, how many wise Admonitions and Instructions would my self-sufficient Heart suggest? How should I recommend implicit Duty and Resignation? But my Opinion is partial, like the Judge's in the Fable. Perhaps, a little Reflection may restore me to my Composure—I will try every Remedy, for so great, so valuable a Blessing.

Friday, 11 o'Clock.

How unavailing is Reason and Reflection, in an Affair that relates to the Affection of the Heart? We often love we know not why—and every Incident that

threatens to quench that ideal Fire, enflames and realizes it.

I will represent my Acquaintance with Lord *Roxburgh* to her Ladyship, with the most candid Sincerity. The Merits, or rather the Virtues, of his Character I will point out to her Observation. If she should, unfortunately, behold him with other Eyes than her Daughter, I will ingenuously acknowledge what Lengths I can go, to preserve my Duty inviolate—I will give him up, as I before mentioned, during her Life; but should I be the Survivor, and his Lordship constant, I would then unite my Fate with his.

Could I but give him a Part in my Uneasiness, the Weight would be considerably lessened; but if my Fears should

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 137

should be merely imaginary, I would not, on any Consideration, give him a wrong Impression of that Parent I would wish him to revere. A few Days will determine the Fate of

Your

LOUISA.



Lady

*Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.
Miss STRETTON.*

LORD *Roxburgh* will attend me on my Journey. I am distressed—know not how to act—he will not be refused. Unlucky!—then, I fear, all must out.

It is as difficult, my *Caroline*, to exclude the Man you love, from a Share in your Inquietudes, as your Satisfaction. I will exert all my Resolution upon this Occasion, and triumph, if possible, over what is called the Weakness of our Sex, notwithstanding it is an Infirmary the Men possess in common with us.

These Lords of the Creation, my *Caroline*, shrink at Disappointment, and are depressed by Adversity, in as
great

great a Degree as we are. Behold them in Sicknefs, *sans* Spirits, *sans* Patience, *sans* every thing. They will tell you, in Excuse for the Inequality of their Minds, that they are not so accustomed to suffer as we Females. But is not that still a greater Reflexion upon them? For, surely, one Calamity may be easier borne than a Multitude.

Mortality is so composed of Folly and Inconsistency, that I do not love to contemplate it. Even our Dresses, as a certain Poet says, are not more fantastick than our Appetites. In short, the Elements do not undergo a greater Variety of Vicissitudes than the Mind of Man.

I am convinced of the Vanity of human Resignation, Reason, and Self-Dependance. The Imagination no
sooner

142 *History of Lady* LOUISA STROUD;
fooner forms a Calamity, than the
Heart is seized with Languor and
Despondence.

But why so industrious to expose my
own Instability? My *Caroline* would
not have discovered the Imperfections
of my Disposition, did I not point
them out to her—the Eye of Friend-
ship contracts Objects, as Malevolence
magnifies; but it is the Desire of my
Heart to retain her good Opinion,
not by imposing myself upon her, in a
false Character, but by my Sincerity.
She might overvalue my supposed Me-
rits, but she knows to do Justice to
Sincerity, by the Dictates of her own
ingenuous Nature.

The

The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

YOUR Brother, my dear *Louisa*, the young, the gay, Lord *Desborough*, entered Yesterday Morning, the shakled State with surprising Magnanimity.

Domestic Life seems to have no Terrors for him—his big Soul equally disdains the Laugh of the World, and the Reign of Petticoat Pre-eminence. It was a Day of sober Festivity—Bruin attempted, once or twice, to introduce some boarish Wit, but he was totally discountenanced and disregarded.

I think, never Couple set out with a more flattering Prospect of Happiness,

144 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*
ness, than these Relations of yours.
The young Lady *Desborough* has, literally, what the News Papers deal out, indiscriminately, to her whole Sex, who are Fortune's Favourites; viz. every Accomplishment requisite to render the Marriage State compleatly happy. If an easy, obliging Disposition, agreeable Flow of Spirits, a good natural Understanding, a pretty Person, large Share of Modesty, and a most uncommon Affection for her Husband, may come under that Denomination.

They are to continue with us a whole six Weeks, and then her innocent, inexperienced Ladyship, is to be initiated into all the unmeaning Mysteries of polite Life.

I pity her extreamly, when I consider, how few of those Beings, who
compose

compose the most brilliant Circles, will be disposed to treat her confined Knowledge of the World with a proper Indulgence. We are apt to confound our Ideas of Ignorance and Stupidity, nor make the least Distinction, between the uninformed, and the dull Afs. It would be no less absurd to laugh at a wild American, because he had never seen his Majesty King *George*, than to consider a country Girl, as a ridiculous Animal, because she is not instinctively acquainted with the Customs of the great World. A very short Time will wear off your Sister's Rusticity; and I am well convinced, she is formed by Nature to outshine those airy Butterflies, who have been, from their Infancy, accustomed to dis-

146. *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

play their gilded Wings to crowded Assemblies of the first Fashion.

My Mind has found an agreeable Dissipation, in these Scenes of rational Felicity; but I cannot intirely suppress my Anxiety for *Horatio's* Fate. What can be the Meaning that I have not any Letters? I have tortured my Brain, 'till I am weary, without the least Success.

Now, that I want you to make Enquiries for me at the *India House*, you are flown to *Bath*, your Head and Heart full of idle Chimeras.—A likely Story, indeed, that your Mother should object to the only Man in the World, that is worthy of her Daughter, excepting one dear Fugitive, who, had he ever beheld her, would, perhaps, never have occasioned her *Caroline* so many tender
Appre-

Apprehensions. Those, my Dear, who have not real Calamities, are vastly ingenious in forming imaginary ones. It is a trite Observation, I confess, but the Truth of it is incontestable.

How irresistibly do you creep up one's Sleeve, with your Self-accusations, and your friendly Encomiums? No Adversity is attended with more humiliating Circumstances than a Disappointment in Love. But I cannot help admiring, how we play the complimentary Ball into each other's Hands. It now rests with me; but the first Time I get upon the Heigho Strain, I shall return it; a Period not far off, unless I receive some re-animating Accounts of my *Horatio*.

“ Yesterday was married, at the
“ *Abbey Church at Bath*, the Right

H 2

“ Honourable

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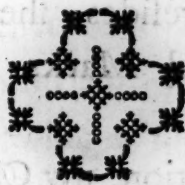
“Honourable the Earl of Roxburgh,
“to the Honourable Lady *Louisa*
“*Stroud.*”

What a delectable Paragraph would that News furnish, with your Genealogies and Descents for some few Generations, collected with the same Accuracy and Judgment as those of the illustrious Fillies, who distinguish themselves upon the Turf, by carrying off the Prize?

But this is all trifling, in which the Heart has no Share—*Horatio's* Welfare hangs heavy upon my Mind. Was I but at Ease in that one Respect, I would give a Loose to the Gaity of my Disposition, and let in my Wit upon you, like an Inundation.

I con-

I conjure you, my *Louisa*, to answer this Letter, so soon as you receive it, to let me know the Event of your Journey, as a double Suspence is insupportable.



150 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD;*

*Lady LOUISA STROUD, to the Hon.
Miss STRETTON.*

Bath.

LATE last Night did *Louisa Stroud*, with a deeply agitated Heart, arrive safe in this City of *Bath*. My faithful Squire, unwillingly, remained at a Coffe-house, whilst my Carriage conveyed me to the Square, where my good Mother resides; she received me with unfeigned Marks of maternal Affection.

This Expedition, my Child, said she, to fulfil your Mother's Desire, is truly amiable—But why do not I see Lord *Roxburgh*? I was confounded, astonished, rejoiced. My Mother's Accent was Harmony itself, and, insensibly, hushed all my Fears into Peace. Why do
you

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 151

you not answer me, *Louisa*? resumed she: Your Brother has apprised me of the Terms you are upon, and prepared me to receive and approve an elected Son.

Ah! Madam, answered I, your Goodness affects me. Sure I have been to blame, in not giving the best of Mother's a Share in the Secrets of my Heart. I do not blame you, my Child, said my Mother, your Choice had your Brother's Sanction. You was conscious I could not be dissatisfied—the rest was owing to the natural Modesty of your Sex. But tell me, where is this Nobleman? I depended upon his escorting you hither.

You was not deceived, Madam, I answered, in your Expectations—I have dropped my Lord at a Coffee-house,

H 4

where

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where I prevailed upon him, though
with great Reluctance, to wait your
Permission for paying his Respects.

Without making me any Reply,
she rang the Bell, and dispatched a
Servant with a very polite Message
to my Lord, who soon made his Ap-
pearance. I think I never saw Lady
Desborough perform any one Action
with so good a Grace as she received
Lord *Roxburgh*.

I am prepared, said she, Sir, by
your friend *Stanley*, to do Justice
to your Merit, and am proud of your
Alliance.

You need not doubt but my de-
lighted Lover was very bountiful in
Acknowledgments for her Ladyship's
Favour and Approbation; and I dare
say, you, who are an Adept at these
Matters,

Matters, will believe me when I assure you, I never spent a more agreeable Evening.

The Happiness that is derived upon us, unexpectedly, has a double Poignancy, as the Expectation is neither wearied nor disappointed.

Indeed, her Ladyship has started one Proposal, that has given me much Perplexity. She says, she imagined Matters were ripe for Conclusion, and as she could not be present at her Son's Nuptials, she sent for me down to *Bath*, that she might have the Pleasure of being an Eye Witness of mine.

In vain do I remonstrate, and repeat the Tye of Friendship I am under. She will insist upon it, that you have a better Understanding (to

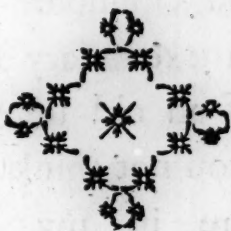
use her very Expression) than to exact so unnatural a Tribute. Her Felicity, she says, is at Stake; she has set her Heart upon it, and commands me to apply to you for a Dispensation.

I know not what to say, or do—Lord *Roxburgh* seems to enjoy my Distress—Could I punish him without being disobedient to my Mother, I really would change his satisfied Looks into a different Cast.

Do not, my Dear, imagine this is any Plot of mine—I abjure the Thought. I do not wish to be released from my Engagement—I am as steady in my Resolution as ever—but I fear you will give me up to Duty and Matrimony, by what I can gather

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 155

ther from some Expressions in your late Epistles. But be assured, my *Caroline*, that my Name, alone, will be changed with my Condition; for my Heart will retain its tender Attachment to you to its latest Existence.



156 *History of Lady* LOUISA STROUD,

The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
Lady LOUISA STROUD.

WHAT a pretty Turn Things have taken? Who, but myself, would have suspected, that this hasty Summons to *Bath* would be productive of a Wedding?

Indeed, *Louisa*, you rise prodigiously in my good Opinion. Such amiable Duty, such exemplary Obedience to the Will of an old unreasonable Mother! Do you not think you make a drole Figure in my Eyes? Well, Child, at once to spare your Blushes, and gratify your Inclination, I do release you from all Obligations whatsoever, of with-holding your Hand from the impatient Lord *Roxburgh*,
until

until my *Heratio's* Return. I do not look upon it, that this World was made for me alone, nor have I so contracted an Heart, as to wish my Friend should do Violence to her Duty, in order to preserve her Adherence, to an idle Fancy, inviolate.

Fair *Euphrosyne* seems to reign in every Breast but mine—I am a solitary *Eve*, but find more Consolation even in that lonely State, than if I was encouraging the Addresses of a Coxcomb, or a Bruin.

If Happiness could be obtained by your Friend's earnest Wishes, you, my *Louisa*, would enjoy a most extensive Share; but your Disposition will incite you, by doing the Thing that is right, to secure you an Interest in that steady Branch of human Felicity, that
is

158 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

is out of the Reach of Storms and Tempests.

There was a Time, when, in Appearance, I was as near the Attainment of an happy Establishment, as you are at this Juncture; but the Prospect vanished like the Morning Vapours.— Heaven avert the same Calamity from falling upon my *Louisa!*



The

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 159

*The Countess of ROXBURGH, to
the Hon. Miss STRETTON.*

YOUR Generosity, my Dear, answered my Mother's Expectations, and deprived me of every Means of evading the most important of all Changes in our mortal State. I was this Morning privately disposed of, and Lord *Roxburgh's* Claim to my best Affection confirmed by the most solemn Tye.

My Mother's Health is greatly improved, and she proposes quitting *Bath* the latter End of next Week. With what Face can I intreat my Friend to accompany my Brother and Sister to Town, who have fallen from my Constancy, my Resolution, and committed
a Breach

a Breach of that Rule I so late looked upon as indispensable? But if the Happiness of your *Louisa* is really dear to you, comply with this earnest Request, and let the Day, that re-united her to a reformed Brother, and engaging Sister, give her back the Friend of her Heart—then will it, indeed, be a Day of rejoicing.

Lord *Roxburgh* and my dear Mother join in this Request—Let not our Intreaties be unsuccessful.



and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 161

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
the Countess of ROXBURGH.*

MY best Congratulations await
my dearest Friend.

*May Day succeed on Day, and Year on Year,
Without a Sigh, a Sorrow, or a Tear.*

Yes, my *Louisa*, I can so far abstract
my Affection for you, from my own
Concerns, as to be sensibly delighted
at your Happiness, notwithstanding
my Prospects are for ever darkened
and obscured.

Horatio, the only Object of my
Hope, has fallen a Martyr to filial
Duty—He just lived to accomplish his
Father's prosperous Schemes, and was
then snatched away for ever!

I, that

I, that could weep at every common Calamity, am now incapable of shedding one Tear. Solitude is my gloomy Refuge, from the officious Comfort my Friends would offer. It is not Words, but Time, that can alone soften such heart-felt Affliction.

Writing, that once grateful Amusement, has lost its Charm—I have no Subject now—what is Conversation, what the World to me? No pleasing Sounds can more salute my Ear, no gay inviting Scene attract my Eyes—The Grave, that Mansion of Mortality, that retains all I hold dear, and to whose peaceful Bosom I am anxious to be consigned, will engross my future Meditations. The Cup of Adversity is best for me—I have, indeed, found it a bitter Draught, but Custom will
reconcile

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 163

reconcile it to my Taste, and Time
extract the fatal Gall.

Alas! why do my Afflictions impede
the general Joy, that so late reigned
in this venerable Asylum? Your Bro-
ther's Countenance is dejected and
compassionate, your Sister's Eyes have
lost Part of their Lustre—she can shed
Abundance of *friendly* Tears, I not
one for *Affection's* Sake.

My Head is unsettled, my Heart
greatly agitated—I can no more—per-
haps Reflection may return to Ease
the Depression of my Spirits.

Read the inclosed, and, from the
Feelings excited in your own Bosom
by Humanity and Friendship, judge,
faintly judge of the Condition of your
Friend.

To

164 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD,*

To Miss STRETTON.

Madam,

MR. *Foster* got me to promise him, a few Hours before he died, that I would take an Opportunity of informing you of it, which I now do. He was returning very successful, but was seized with a Fever, that broke out amongst the Crew, which carried him off in a few Days.

I am, Madam,

Your Humble Servant,

JAMES DENTON.

How unfeeling must the Heart of that Person be who wrote this dire Epistle? My *Horatio* had too much
Tender-

Tendernefs for me, not to enjoin him to break the horrid Tidings, in as foft a Manner as he was capable—Yet let me not wrong him—perhaps he communicated it in the gentleft Terms he was Mafter of.

I cannot bear to look back, I have no Encouragement to look forward—Oh! that I could learn of our good Parfon to be resigned! Have not his Tryals been fuperlatively great? Yet has the Confideration of the Almighty Hand that impofed them, fubdued all unworthy Repinings.

Write to me, my *Louifa*, chide me, paint all the dear Perfections of my *Horatio*; rouze me, by any Means, from my prefent painful Infenfibility, and penetrate the frozen Avenues of my Heart.

The

*The Countess of ROXBURGH, to
the Hon. Miss STRETTON.*

I NEVER found writing to my dear *Caroline* a Task until now. This unexpected, unhappy Turn in her Prospects has overwhelmed me with a kind of heavy Stupidity. But, my dear Girl, do not let us suffer ourselves to be overcome by a Calamity that is meant only for our Chastisement. We are the unfortunate, *Horatio* the happy Being. His good Designs he lived to accomplish, and his Piety is now receiving its full Reward.

We mistake, my Dear, when we fancy we weep the Dead. If we really believe

believe that the Grave is an Asylum from Sin and Sorrow, are not our Tears a Reproach to our Faith? Can we say we have Hope, that our Friend is received into the Mansions of Immortality, that he is admitted to the Fulness of Joy, and yet in the same Moment weep, because he did not obtain those Desires of Humanity, those empty Joys he had promised himself?

It is Self-love that occasions this Inconsistence in our Conduct; it is the Disappointment of our own narrow Views that we mourn. We are almost tempted to arraign the Justice of that Power who has graciously transplanted our beloved Friend from a Life of Care to the most permanent Felicity, because it disconcerts our Plans; and we cannot be satisfied with Existence

on any other Terms, than their Continuance with us, to partake our Sorrows, or, at best, transitory Enjoyments.

You must permit me to intreat you to give us your Company—you shall live agreeable to your own Inclination—I will neither attempt to prescribe, or infringe upon your chosen Rules. Lord *Roxburgh* and myself will be your only Companions. You love my Sister, let her convey you to Town—I have a thousand Things to say to you, nor can I, at this Distance, either communicate them, or convince you, with how much undissembled Affection I am your sincere Friend.

The

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 169

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to the
Countess of ROXBURGH.*

AH! *Louisa*, that ever your friendly Solicitations should be disgraceful to me!—but my Purpose is unalterable—never will I quit this Retirement. I well know what Satisfaction the World can give ; not one to heal the Wound of Discontent. The gay, unfeeling Heart alone, can taste the Joys of Midnight Revels.

Alas ! What Pleasure could I derive from holding, before my aching Eyes, a Parcel of unmeaning Bits of spotted Paper ? Quadrille has a poor Sound to the Ear of sad Dejection. My Affliction is not a Torrent that will soon

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I

exhaust

exhaust itself by its rapid Course, but is heavy, steady, permanent. It intermixes with the Current of my Existence, and will only arrive at its Termination, when Life itself stands still.

By clouding the Satisfaction of my Friends, I should but augment my own Uneasiness.

I confess, your Sister's Departure will give me a Shock, as she has that kind of Disposition, that is most salutary to an afflicted Mind—but I shall still have Lady *Stretton's* Company, and that of our pious Neighbours. With them, my Dear, I have a much better Chance, for recovering some Degree of Repose, than I could possibly

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 171

bly have in a Town that is my
Aversion.

This Wretch, Mr. *Roger*, is surely
composed of adamantine Materials !
His flinty Heart, alone, has been un-
concerned at my deep Distress. I
would not be uncharitable, but I
really think he takes a barbarous
Pleasure, in beholding my altered
Looks. I wish my good *Lady Stret-*
ton would send him Home, for
the very Sight of him is odious
to me.

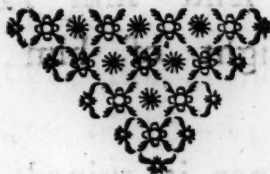
My Temper is ruined for ever—
Petulance and Dissatisfaction is all
I am capable of—it betrays a nar-
row Soul—but it is my Nature,
Louisa, and I cannot restrain it.

172. *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD;*

The unwearied Tendernefs and Com-
plaifance of my Friends, is an amia-
ble Contrast, to the unworthy Dif-
pofition of

Your unhappy

CAROLINE.



The

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 173

The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
the Countess of ROXBURGH.

FOR what new Vexations am I reserved? Oh, my *Louisa*, I have this Morning sustained such inhuman Treatment, as the most brutal Nature could, alone, be capable of.

I had been taking a melancholy Walk, in a little Nursery, at the Extremity of the *Park*—a Walk much frequented by my Dear *Horatio*—when I perceived *Roger* at a little Distance.

As I was without Company, I had no Suspicion he meant to join me; for I have heard him declare, that a Woman in the Dumps for the Loss of her

I 3

Lover

174 *History of Lady LOUISA STROUD;*
Lover (so he unfeelingly calls my Affliction) is a more unpleasant Companion, than a Hound that has lost her Puppies. I, nevertheless, found he was striking into the same Path I was then in, in order to meet me. I endeavoured to shun him, but in vain; he seized my Cloak in his horrid Paw, and insisted upon my hearing what he had to say. You may conceive with what Reluctance I obliged him. He then told me, without any farther Preface, that he had long set his Mind upon me; and tho' I had slighted him for the Sake of a broken Merchant's Son, he loved me still; that now Death had carried off the Man I preferred to him, and I found myself disappointed of a Husband, mayhap
I might

I might have thought better on't; and if so be I would consent to take him for want of a better, he would make me a swinging Jointure, and therefore he know'd who would have the worst Bargain.

I would have broke from him, without making him the least Reply, my Soul disdaining to hold Converse with such a Savage; but I was not to get off so easily.

What! so you don't think it worth your while to speak to me? said he; but fulk if you will, its all one to *Roger*; he knows a Trick that will bring down your proud Stomach. You shall either marry him, or do worse; and so you shall find.

What his brutal Intention was, I know not; for your Brother and Sister, most fortunately making their Appearance, delivered me from farther Insolence and Inhumanity.

I confess I am greatly intimidated by his Menaces. Sir *Ralph* has talked to him very severely; but he can extort no one Confession from him, or the slightest Information of his Schemes. He makes no other Answer than, that he knows his own know, and that it had been best for me not to have provoked him. Sir *Ralph* has wrote an Account of his Behaviour to his Father, and desired him to come and fetch him Home; but he would gladly get to the Bottom of his Designs, before he returns, to prevent effectually the Execution

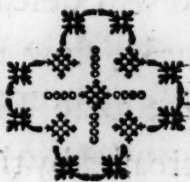
Execution of them. He is to pass a second Examination on his Father's Arrival.

Thus you see, my Dear, my Misfortunes are multiplied. I am, indeed, more hurt by his unworthy mention of my valued Lover, than at any other Part of his Behaviour. What the Consequence may be, is still in Embryo; but I have Reason to think, that a sick Bed will defeat his Purpose.

I have an ugly, slow Fever, that has preyed upon me some Time, and which seems to be increased by the present Agitation of my Mind. I hope you will remember, if it should be fatal to the Life of your *Caroline*, the excellent Precepts your last Letter contains. Your Repose will be ever dear to me;

178 *History of Lady Louisa Stroud;*

then do not let me have the Mortification, of considering myself as an Obstruction to it, but resign your Friend to Peace and the Grave, with that becoming Fortitude you recommend to her, with respect to her *Horatio*.



*The Countess of ROXBURGH, to
the Hon. Miss STRETTON.*

TELL me, my *Caroline*, by the first Return of the Post, whether your Spirits are strong enough to bear an agreeable Surprise. I have made a most extraordinary Discovery—I am impatient to communicate it, but am apprehensive you are too weak, at present, to be trusted with Particulars. Hope every thing your Heart can wish, look forward to a Day of Satisfaction, and delay not, with the utmost Expedition, to relieve the Anxiety of your alarmed Friend.

*The Countess of ROXBURGH, to the
Countess of DESBOROUGH.*

Notwithstanding I am a personal Stranger to my dear Sister, I doubt not but she is as well acquainted with me, by the Description of my Brother and Friend, as I am with her.

I dare not, upon Reflection, trust even the enclosed Note to reach Miss *Stretton*, without some tender Preparation. I know no one so capable of performing this delicate Task, as yourself.—Your own Heart will best teach you the Manner.—*Horatio Foster* lives! When you judge our Friend can bear the unexpected, joyful Intelligence, communicate it to her. My own
Peace

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 181

Peace and Happiness are not dearer to me than hers. I am so transported with Pleasure and Surprise, that I am not able to express myself with the least Degree of Propriety; but as Ceremony is incompatible with the affectionate Terms I flatter myself we shall be upon, I put my self, without Hesitation, into your Hands, in the utmost Dishabille of friendly Agitation.

A Line, by the Return of the Post, to acquaint me with the Particulars of your Proceedings, and my Friend's Health, will be received with Gratitude, by my Dear Sister's

Affectionate,

ROXBURGH.

My Love to *Stanley*.

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*The Countess of DESBOROUGH to
the Countess of ROXBURGH.*

Dear Sister,

I WILL acknowledge, that I attempted to evade your Request, of answering your obliging Letter, by intreating your Brother to give you the consequential Particulars; but he has had the Cruelty to leave my unassisted Inexperience, to paint Scenes that deserve the Pen of a skilful Artist. But as, I presume, you are not unacquainted with my confined Education, and retired Life, I dare rely upon your Good-nature for such candid Consideration as my Case really requires.

Our

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 183

Our poor dear Friend had passed but a very indifferent Night, was excessively low, drooping and melancholy, when the Post arrived. I was astonished to hear there was a little Pacquet for me, and opened it with some Trepidation. But to describe my Feelings, when I cast my Eyes upon the Contents, I am quite unequal—My Lord, your Brother, was alarmed. I hope, said he, no bad News? If, replied I, you will withdraw with me, I should be obliged to you, as I really want your Advice, on an agreeable and important Occasion. He followed me into the Saloon, and was no less amazed and rejoiced than myself, at the Contents of your Ladyship's Letter; but, with a provoking Kindness,

Kindness, declared the Business was all my own, and that he left the Management of it to my Discretion; the Discretion of a Girl of Seventeen.

I find I shall be very tedious in my Account; but you know, Madam, Want of Practice often misleads one. I was distressed to a Degree; but, on rejoining the Company, my Husband (why are not literal, fashionable Terms?) judiciously contrived to leave Miss *Stretton* and me alone.

You appear pleased, my Dear, said she; I have not seen you look so agreeably for some Time—your compassionate Sympathy was a Disadvantage to your Countenance—Why was you formed with such a pity-feeling Heart? I would not, my dear Miss *Stretton*, re-
turned

turned I, forfeit the Sensibility of my Nature, on any Consideration; for if I was incapable of sharing in my Friends Misfortunes, I should be unworthy to partake of their Felicities.

Ah! my Love, replied our disconsolate Friend, there is no Recompence for your humane Behaviour to me—my Happiness is set, never to rise again.

I am far from despairing, said I—You must not mention it, she replied; my Case will not admit one flattering Ray. I have had a Letter from my Sister, I said. Her Friendship and yours, she returned, are my only Satisfaction; but even they are insufficient to compose my Grief. But suppose, resumed I, Lady *Louisa* should have

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have some good News for you? Whatever relates to her Happiness, answered she, I cannot be insensible to.

Oh! my Sister, it would have broke your Heart, to see the steady Dejection of her Aspect!

But, my dear Miss *Stretton*, I said, the News relates to you; why will you not be attentive? I have no Curiosity, she replied; I had rather not hear it—it can but recal those Hopes that Death has blasted. But suppose you should have been deceived? said I. How! returned she. (Dear Madam, she looked so wildly, she terrified me; but, softening her Accent) take Care, take Care, Lady *Desborough*, how you impart one false Encouragement; instead of answering
the

the Purpose your mistaken Friendship may suggest—my Life would be the Result of so fatal a Delusion. Indeed, answered I, my dear Madam, I do not even wish to deceive; it would be a cruel, instead of a friendly Artifice. But (what Variety of Changes did her fine Features undergo?) But what? said she: Tell me all, Lady *Desborough*. Why, my dear Friend, said I, if you think you can bear it, I have a Letter for you from Mr. *Foster*. From Mr. *Foster*? returned she: Does he live? And shall we meet again?

I had now new Apprehensions; her Expectations were raised to the highest Pitch—a Disappointment might have destroyed all our Hopes—I therefore gave her your Letter to me, to convince

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vince her, in the most material Point,
and shewed her the other afterwards.

She distained the valuable Paper
with Tears of Joy, and begged, with
as much Coherence as she was capable
of, that I would retire. I left her to
her own Reflexions, with a Pleasure my
Heart has been, for this long Time,
a Stranger to. I suppose you will
hear from her by the next Post; but
this, by going off immediately, ob-
liges me to close my Relation abruptly,
without allowing me a Moment to apo-
logize for the Defects and Imperfecti-
ons of,

Dear Madam,

Your most affectionate Sister,

DESBOROUGH.

The

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 189

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
the Countess of ROXBURGH.*

YOU have, indeed, my *Louisa*, inspired me with new Life and Spirits. But how could you have the Cruelty to conceal the Particulars of this happy Discovery from me? Where is the dear Man? How does he do? A thousand, and a thousand Questions I want to have resolved. Never can I sufficiently esteem or extol your amiable Sister—I am half frantic with Satisfaction. *Bruin* looks confounded, chagrined, and envious. I have desired Sir *Ralph* to set him at Liberty—I defy all his Schemes now.—I am called away a few Moments.

Oh!



Oh! dear *Louisa*, I have such a Tale for you! Who do you think I am indebted to for all the wretched Days I have passed? Even our Brute *Roger*, with the Assistance of your Brother's Valet.

No sooner did this Bear of Prey recover his Liberty, than he learned the Cause of my altered Looks and Behaviour; upon which Information, he was guilty of one kind Action, even running away.

His Elopement becomes the Talk of the House—Mr. Valet hears it, is seized with a Fit of trembling, intreats your Brother to honour him with a few Minutes Audience, is admitted, kneels down upon his Marrow-bones,
and

and confesses, " That, not having
" the Fear of *God* before his Eyes,
" he was prevailed upon, by Bruin the
" Bear, to forge a Letter, as from a
" Sailor, containing an Account of
" the Death of Mr. *Foster*; that, more-
" over, he had been drawn in, by the
" Temptation of an hundred Pounds
" Reward, to form a desperate and
" abominable Scheme of carrying off
" your Friend's Body, to a proper
" Place, where Bruin was to have re-
" ceived her, and taken some brutal
" Measures to compel her to accept
" of him, for her dearly beloved
" Husband; for that he, the said Bruin,
" did testify and declare, he could not
" live without her."

How

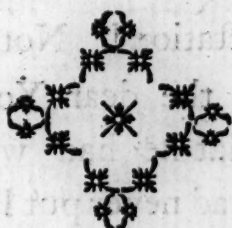
How I am grieved, that so excellent a Plot should be defeated? The Fellow would make a Merit of this Confession, but Lord *Desborough* says, no: He is a Day too late; for that Bruin's Escape making him apprehend he should be betrayed, not the least Spark of Honour or Honesty extorted it from him; and it is now in Debate how he shall be disposed of.

Here's a Deliverance for you!— But all this Time where is my *Horatio*? Ought I not to have heard from him? Ought I not to have seen him? Pray clear up my Doubts, if you would wish to secure him a kind Reception; for, notwithstanding I should not long have survived the worthy, constant Mr. *Foster*, I could despise and cast off the unworthy Inconstant.

Acquit

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 193

Acquit him, my *Louisa*, if possible,
of all Appearance of Deceit or Dis-
respect, for my Happiness is too
closely connected with his Affection
for me.



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K

The

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*The Countess of ROXBURGH, to
the Hon. Miss STRETTON.*

WHAT pretty see-saw Work you would make of it! *Horatio* dead, you will dye likewise; *Horatio* living, and you will break off all Connexion with him, if he has been deficient in the minutest Punctilio. What Affectation! Notwithstanding which, was the dear Youth but to set forth, that he had wrote to you (though he had never put Pen to Paper) that his Thoughts had been constantly employed by your lovely Remembrance, (though he had never once troubled his Head about you) and that he was as much devoted to
you

you as ever (though I should send you Word he was upon the Point of Marriage with another) yet you would pay an implicit Faith to every tender Declaration.—So strongly are you infatuated, by the alluring Power of Love.

Well, but you are vastly curious to know how, and when, I made this interesting Discovery—I am half inclined to punish your Affectation, by keeping you in Suspence—but, as I should possibly cut myself out of some pretty Compliments of Gratitude, &c. &c. I will condescend to inform you.

On *Wednesday* last I was invited to a private Concert, at Lord *Singleton's*. I had not been in the Room above a

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Quarter of an Hour, before the Door was thrown open, and I heard the Servant proclaim the Entrance of Sir *Benjamin Foster*—I was surprised and affected—but judge of my Astonishment, when I beheld a chearful Countenance, and coloured Suit of Cloaths!

Lord *Roxburgh* was at the other End of the Room—I was some Time before I recovered myself so far as to be able to make his Lordship a Signal, to let me speak to him. When I had informed him of the Cause of my Disorder, he agreed, that it was a most extraordinary Incident, and proposed enquiring into the Reason immediately; to which I, as a dutiful Wife, made not the least Objection.

He

He addressed the Knight in general Terms, for a short Period; and then demanded, when he had heard from abroad? The old Gentleman said, he had received a Letter, the very preceeding Day, from his Son, who was arrived safe in the *Downs*, but had enjoined him Secresy, as he proposed surprising a Lady, to whom, he flattered himself, he was of Consequence sufficient to promise himself much Pleasure in an unexpected Rencounter.

My kind Lord conducted him to me, and introduced me as a particular Friend of that Lady his Son so deservedly esteemed. You may be sure I did not fail to inform him of our Alarms and Apprehensions; and

added, that I could never forgive his Son, if he had been concerned in occasioning us so much Affliction, and did not doubt but you would resent such unworthy Treatment in a proper Manner.

The Knight was both mortified and confounded. If he knew his Son's Heart, he said, it was incapable of such an Action. Appearances, he added, might be against the poor Boy, but begged we would not judge him with too much Severity; for he had great Reason to be assured, that if he lost that Lady's Affections, he was undone. As we could not clear the matter up, we left it as we found it. I will confess, that I accused your *Horatio's* Heart of Pride, Barbarity, and the most consummate

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 199

summate Vanity. It was settled, that he should make me a Visit, previous to his Country Journey; and, not content with that, I have dispatched a Card to the old Gentleman, wherein I have insisted upon seeing the young one so soon as he arrives, of which I am in hourly Expectation.

I desire you will thank my Sister for the kind Letter she sent me—I will give her my Sentiments of it when we meet—an Happiness impatiently desired on my Part.

How is my Heart relieved by these agreeable Turns of Fortune? For, seriously, *Caroline*, your Afflictions would have been an infallible Allay to the Felicity of Your

LOUISA.

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*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to the
Countess of ROXBURGH.*

HOW wonderful the Chain of human Events! That you should go to a Concert, and that Sir *Benjamin Foster* should be invited to that very Concert, is no less extraordinary than delightful. Now am I my *Horatio's* as strong as ever.

But, *Louisa*, I hope you will not be so unreasonable as to detain him long in Town. Why dissemble? I do wish earnestly to see him, nor will my Felicity be perfect, until that happy Period. Happiness and I had so long shook Hands, that it is a kind of new Life

to

to me to taste it. Think of a Criminal, at the very Place of Execution, the Halter round his Neck, the Cart ready to be drawn away, and in pops a Reprieve—no other Being can have the least Conception of my Sensations.

I have but one Doubt now, and that is, that *Horatio* will not like me—this fretting has made quite a Witch of me—I am as pale, haggard and languid, as if I was going to give up the Ghost. I believe these Eyes will never more pretend to dart Destruction; they have contracted a Mistiness, a kind of Fog, that totally eclipses their wonted Lustre.

But should he prove such a Rogue, as to slight my blasted Charms, I be-

lieve I shall become so wise a Woman as to despise him heartily—but he is out of the Reach of such Absurdities.

I'll tell you, *Louisa*, the Scheme I have formed. He shall visit us at the *Abbey*—we will condescend to be escorted to Town—I will fly to every public Place—take my Swing of Folly the ensuing Winter—and marry *Horatio*, if he should continue to deserve my Hand, the succeeding Summer.

But hold—let me reflect a little. And is this the noble Use I propose making of that Happiness Providence has been pleased to pour unexpectedly into my Lap? And shall my newly revived Spirits, and returning
Health,

Health, answer no other Purpose, than hurrying me once more into those Follies I ought to contemn and shun?—Unworthy Thoughts! No; my future Life shall be dedicated to rational Delights—Reason shall be my Rule of Action—Compassion, only, the weak Part of my Character—Love, Friendship and Propriety, shall procure that Felicity for me, that is unclogged by Folly, unalloyed by Repentance.

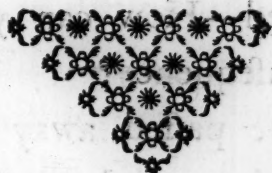
But, *Louisa*, you must tell me how you like the shackled State—Does the good Lord *Roxburgh* remain polite and unassuming? I never could suffer a Creature to oppose my Will and Pleasure, because it might not be his. Do you wish it was

possible to return to your maiden State? To Love uncontrouled? To have your Heart informed only by the Glow of Friendship? Come, be sincere. Or is your Disposition so servile, as to be in love with Bondage, and prefer the matrimonial Slavery, to the Reproach of ancient Virginity?

You see I am still the same Trifler. — Affliction, indeed, pours cold Water upon my Vivacity; but no sooner does the Current reflux, than vain Gaiety again begins to rear her Head, and my Relish for Sprightliness returns. But should I once more enter into publick Life, you, my *Louisa*, shall

And the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 205

shall be my amiable Pattern—I
will never take one Step without
you, and then I shall be secure from
Error.



The

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
the Countess of ROXBURGH.*

IT is very well—neither Mr. *Horatio Foster*, nor any Accounts of him, have yet reached the *Abbey*—I did not expect, *Louisa*, that you would have trifled with me, before my Health is re-established—How can you answer for the Consequence?

You have passed away your Life without either violent Storms, or scorching Sun-shine; you have experienced no Inconveniencies, no Disappointments; and, therefore, think it is a mighty easy Matter to be composed upon every Occasion. Was it not not for your Sister, I should relapse

lapse into all my former Glooms and Horrors. How can you be so unkind, so inconsiderate? If it is at *Horatio's* Request, I should make him repent. A very pretty Method, of shewing Affection, indeed, to torment the pretended Object of it!

Forgive my Petulance, *Louisa*—I really am not myself. These Ebbs and Flows of Happiness try my Patience and Temper to the uttermost—I cannot bear them.

If you have either Love or Pity, put a Period to my doubtful Expectations. If I am never more to see this *Horatio*, that has occasioned me so much Uneasiness—I will endeavour to be satisfied—but Suspence is more than I am equal to. My
Health

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Health will be irreparably destroyed—your agreeable Surprise, if you are preparing one for me, will happen too late.—What will you not then have to reproach yourself withal?

Do, my Dear, my much valued Friend, take Compassion on my Weakness. Do not bring me into Contempt with the Family I am with, for being over anxious about a Man, who, perhaps, thinks not of me. I will fly to some Solitude, where none of you shall find me, rather than I will submit to be made a Jest of, where I expected to meet with Tenderness. Adieu.

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and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 209

The Countess of ROXBURGH, to
the Hon. Miss STRETTON.

UNGENEROUS *Caroline*! How have I merited your Reproaches? But I feel for you, and pity your anxious Suspence. Mr. *Foster* is not yet arrived, or, you may be assured, you had heard every Particular, long before this. Lord *Roxburgh* has been twice at Sir *Benjamin's*, without Satisfaction. He is hourly expected, is the constant Answer.

Your Situation is by no means eligible, not knowing what to apprehend or conjecture; but do not suffer this natural Impatience to injure your
Health;

Health; that would, indeed, be an unhappy Circumstance. It is strange that you should harbour so ill an Opinion of me, as to suppose me capable of playing with your Peace of Mind. A Messenger—perhaps from the Man in Question—I fly to receive it.



I have seen, I have conversed with your charming *Horatio*, and approve him unfeignedly. He would have set off, this very Night, for the *Abbey*; but for your mutual Advantage I have prevailed upon him to postpone his Journey, until the day after To-morrow. He has endured too much Fatigue, not to require some Repose;
a Fever

a Fever would, in all Probability, have been the Consequence of his rash Determination. Am I not your common Friend? I know you will consider me in that Light hereafter, whatever Resentment you may, at present, feel against my Proceedings. I only delay your Happiness, in order to render it permanent.

I undertook to make an innumerable Number of soft Speeches for *Horatio*; but as you will so soon meet, I shall not spend my Time in writing, what you would much rather hear from his Lips.

Now, my *Caroline*, I think I may safely congratulate both you and myself on our approaching Happiness.

You

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You will, doubtless, become a Wife
in a short Period, and I shall have the
unspeakable Satisfaction of embracing
my Friend.



The

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 213

*The Hon. Miss STRETTON, to
the Countess of ROXBURGH.*

THE long wished-for Day is at length arrived, and my *Horatio* and I are re-united. Your Brother and Sister are pleased to make me many Compliments upon my Choice.—Really, *Louisa*, he is a pretty Fellow.

I know not how it is, but I still feel a kind of doubtful Joy. I have been so long perplexed by Fictions, that I can, with Difficulty, trust to Realities.

I'll assure you, he is in love with you.—Your Person, Manners, Understanding, all so unexceptionable—

I bless

I blefs myself he did not become acquainted with you five Years ago.

I have had a very polite Letter from Sir *Benjamin*, expressing high Approbation of his intended Daughter. But his Knightship seems to think our Amour much nearer a Conclusion than I myself apprehend. No, no—it is so long since we have seen each other, that we must have forgot our several Perfections—I intend to begin again. A Year hence will be early enough to talk of Matrimony.

Sir *Benjamin's* Affairs are in as flourishing a Condition as ever—a handsome Settlement is talked of—but take Notice, *Louisa*, it is talked of at a Distance.

We

We lead a jovial Life at present—
I am the Queen of the Ceremony—
your little prim Sister, Lord *Desbo-*
rough's young Wife, she, indeed,
seems rather intitled to the Pre-
eminence; but she is a Wife, *Louisa*,
and no one minds such tame Animals.

I think sweet five and twenty is
absolutely the best Age for changing
one's Condition—An earlier Period
is *sacrificing* one's Liberty—a latter *sel-*
ling it.—Five and twenty then for my
Money.

Saturday Morn.

Horatio and I are two—we have qua-
relled, my Dear—that's all. He is an
Encroacher — pretends to prescribe,
without Authority—You may depend
upon it I would never suffer that.

We

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—We were sitting in an indolent *tete à tete* Way after Breakfast—all the good Company most kindly withdrawn, when he, with an assured Look, said, My dear Miss *Stretton*, we have had no serious Chat yet—I hope you will not think me too presuming, if I intreat you to consent to be mine, some early Day that may best suit your Convenience; as I flattered Sir *Benjamin* I would not be absent from *London* above three Weeks in the whole. Pray, Sir, answered I, is there any Necessity for your disappointing Sir *Benjamin*? Can you not give us your Company so long as is convenient, and then—I know not how it was, *Louisa*, I intended to have thrown his Hopes to a very great Distance, in order to punish his Confidence;

dence; but I stopped on the sudden—
I could not proceed.

The Man, my Dear, with all the Marks of Astonishment in his Countenance, considered me attentively the Space of a Moment, and then, can this be Miss *Stretton*? he said; the Lady who was so kindly propitious to my Addresses before I left *England*, that a very few Weeks would have united us for ever?—It cannot be.

I was rather abashed—but Heart's Ease, ever my Bane, impelled me to be lofty. And do you, Sir, said I, reproach me with too much Kindness?

Up he started, and traversing the Room, in apparent Disorder, he was, for some Time, silent. I began to wish I had played a more discreet Part;

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but, however, thought I, I have discovered his natural Disposition, hasty, passionate Creature, as he is, and I am determined not to submit.—If I lose him for this little Trick, why, fare him well.

I sat with Lamb-like Patience, though, I confess, not perfectly easy, waiting for his Honour to open—but he became as suddenly composed, as he had hastily been warm; and resuming his Seat, he begged my Pardon for his improper Behaviour, but protested he was so amazed and mortified, at my cool Treatment of him, that it had transported him off his Guard.—He found he was mistaken, in considering himself as established in my good Opinion, and as the Man
I in-

I intended honouring with my Heart and Hand—but he was all Submission to my Will—he had not experienced so many Disappointments, not to be broken to the Yoke—and he would never more offend by too much Presumption.

How artful all this?—It succeeded. I received him, once more, into Favour; the Cloud dispersed from his Brow, and all was well again.

But, this Morning, no sooner did I make my Appearance, than my Eyes were saluted with Shoals of Parchments, which a lean, Bumpkin of an Attorney was preparing to read to me, Sir *Ralph*, and the good Company. He struck up the harsh Notes, and proceeded with great Solemnity, until he

began to make free with my Name; I then, with great Composure and Civility, asked him, what I had to do there? He was disconcerted—your Sister laughed—Sir *Ralph* frowned—and the dear *Horatio* was ready to burst with Vexation. No one offering to speak, and the good Mr. *Capias* just about to proceed a second Time, I thought proper to withdraw; which Conduct has been taken so heinously, that we are all to pieces.

Now, *Louisa*, you must know, if I was ever so well affected, with respect to changing my Condition, I would not submit to have my Ears grated with Deeds and Settlements. I find it was Sir *Ralph's* Management; but I can rely upon him, and will never expose

and the Hon. Miss STRETTON. 221

pose myself to Sale in so indelicate a Manner.

Saturday Night.

My Tune is strangely changed. Though I would not hear the Deeds read, I have been present at the signing and sealing of them, and have been brought to such an unexpected Resolution—I know not how to tell it you, *Louisa*—but I have really consented to become a Wife To-morrow Morning. *Sunday* is an odd Day, methinks—but then, as it is my Birth Day—one may as well commit a silly Action upon it, as any Day in the Year. I do not think I shall ever repent my Compliance. *Horatio* is, as the World goes, a most extraordinary young

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young Man—but, then, a Husband,
my Dear, is a tremendous Being!

Twelve o'Clock.

You never answered my Interrogatories, *Louisa*, about this married Life of yours—It was artfully evaded—I don't like the Appearance—you would not be insincere, therefore are silent—Is not that the Case? Ah! before I receive your Answer, it will be too late for me to reap the Benefit of your unhappy Experience, if it is really unhappy.

Sunday, Ten o'Clock.

We are just returned from Church, my dear Sister. Your Friend *Caroline* is now a Bride. You will gladly join your best Wishes with mine, that she
may

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may ever look back to this Day as the happiest of her Life.

We shall all be in Town next Week, when our general Felicity will be infinitely augmented, by being communicated more extensively. Generous Minds cannot be satisfied with selfish Happiness—it is Diffusion, alone, that can content their ample Hearts.

F I N I S.

and the first Mrs. Stratton and
may ever look back to this day as the
happiest of her life. We shall all be in Town next
Week, when our General Festival
will be joyfully anticipated, by us
and our kindred. We are
Generous. We are not to be
with little. Happiness—it is
from above, the contentment
simple Heart.



3

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